Educational Autonomy and Accountability Among Public Secondary School Heads

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Abstract — This study investigated the educational autonomy and accountability among public secondary school HEADS in DADASANTRI Sub-Congressional District in DepEd Schools Division of Bohol during the School Year 2024-2025. The research involved a total population of 128 participants, comprising 16 school heads and 112 teachers. The study aimed to determine whether variables such as age, sex, civil status, highest educational attainment, position/designation, length of service, and participation in seminars/trainings significantly influence perceptions of autonomy and accountability in the educational context. Utilizing quantitative methods, data were analyzed through SPSS, employing Multiple Regression Analysis and Pearson r Correlation to test for relationships and strength of associations among variables.

Findings revealed that the profile variables of both school heads and teachers had no significant relationship with their perceived status of educational autonomy and accountability. The results of the regression analyses indicated low R-squared values, showing weak predictive capacity of the independent variables. Furthermore, Pearson r correlation showed several strong and significant relationships between components of autonomy and accountability, particularly in areas such as assessment design, professional development control, and learner performance monitoring. These findings highlight that while personal and professional characteristics of educators may not predict their perceptions of autonomy and accountability, the specific practices and systems within schools play a more critical role.

The study concludes that enhancing school-based mechanisms, fostering collaborative leadership, and promoting a culture of reflective practice are essential in strengthening both

autonomy and accountability. It recommends the implementation of targeted programs focusing on instructional leadership, participatory governance, and internal quality assurance systems. This research provides valuable insights for policymakers, school administrators, and educators aiming to balance professional independence with institutional responsibility in educational institutions.

Keywords: Educational Autonomy, Accountability, Multiple Regression, Pearson Correlation, School Governance

I.   INTRODUCTION

Modern education reforms increasingly center on the principles of school autonomy and accountability, which aim to create more flexible and efficient systems capable of responding to social, economic, and technological change. In the context of the DADASANTRI Sub-Congressional District in the DepEd Schools Division of Bohol, this shift is reflected in the School Autonomy with Accountability (SAWA) model, which grants schools greater decision-making authority while holding them responsible for performance outcomes. SAWA operates through interconnected instruments such as learning standards, large-scale assessments, school improvement plans, accountability contracts, and managerial leadership practices. As a policy model positioned between broad policy paradigms and specific interventions, it not only guides reform design but also prescribes performance-oriented goals that move education systems away from traditional, input-based approaches. Rooted in New Public Management principles, SAWA supports decentralization, outcomes-based management, and a regulatory state role centered on evaluation rather than direct control. While many stakeholders in the district value SAWA for strengthening professional agency and allowing schools to adapt to local needs, the model has also generated criticism, particularly when expanded autonomy is paired with heightened monitoring and high-stakes assessment mechanisms.

Statement of the Problem

This study aims to investigate the educational autonomy and accountability among secondary school heads of DADASANTRI Sub-Congressional District in DepEd Schools Division of Bohol during the School Year 2024-2025 with the end view of proposing a program.

Specifically, the study seeks answers to the following questions.

1. What is the profile of the respondents in terms of:

1.1 School Heads;

1.1.1 Age;

1.1.2 Gender;

1.1.3 Civil Status;

1.1.4 Educational Attainment;

1.1.5 Position/Designation;

1.1.6 Length of Administrative Experience; and

1.1.7 Number of Relevant Seminars and Trainings Attended?

1.2 Teachers;

1.2.1 Age;

1.2.2 Gender;

1.2.3 Civil Status;

1.2.4 Educational Attainment;

1.2.5 Position/Designation;

1.2.6 Length of Teaching Experience; and

1.2.7 Number of Relevant Seminars and Trainings Attended?

2. What is the perceived status of the educational autonomy in terms of:

2.1 curriculum decision-making autonomy;

2.2 instructional strategy flexibility;

2.3 assessment design autonomy; and

2.4 professional development control?

3. What is the perceived status of the educational accountability in terms of:

3.1 curriculum standards compliance;

3.2 learner performance monitoring;

3.3 teacher instructional supervision; and

3.4 instructional reporting and documentation?

4. Is there a significant relationship between the profile of the respondent groups and the perceived status of the educational autonomy?

5. Is there a significant relationship between the profile of the respondent groups and the perceived status of the educational accountability?

6. Is there a significant relationship between the perceived status of the educational autonomy and the perceived status of the educational accountability?

7. Based on the findings of the study, what program can be proposed?

II.   METHODOLOGY

The research study made use of the descriptive-correlational research design. It is descriptive quantitative because it determines the profile of the secondary school heads and teachers in terms of age, gender, civil status, highest educational attainment, and length of administrative/teaching experience, and seminars/training attended; level of strategic teaching thinking; and the level of school performance outcomes. In addition, this study is correlational because it tests the relationships between and among the listed variables.

The researchers sought permission from the head of the office where the research was conducted and presented a transmittal letter to the Schools Division Superintendent seeking authorization for the study. The researchers distributed, administered, and retrieved the questionnaire from the respondents. The responses were tabulated, analyzed, and interpreted using various statistical tests, including percentage, simple mean, and the sum of ranks.

III.   RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The school heads form a diverse and balanced group, with most in the 42–48 age range and others spread across younger and older brackets, creating a healthy mix of fresh ideas and seasoned experience. Women slightly outnumber men, reflecting growing inclusivity in leadership. Most are married, contributing to a sense of stability, and all have pursued graduate studies, showing strong dedication to their professional growth. A majority serve as Principal I–II, taking on major responsibilities in school management. While many have less than 10 years of administrative experience, others bring longer service that adds guidance and continuity. Most have joined national trainings, though fewer have participated in regional or international programs, highlighting active local engagement but limited exposure to broader educational perspectives.

TABLE 1 FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION ON THE DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF THE SCHOOL HEADS

Age	Frequency	Percent
56-62	3	18.8%
49-55	4	25.0%
42-48	6	37.5%
35-41	3	18.8%
Total	**16**	**100.0%**
Sex	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Male	7	43.8%
Female	9	56.3%
Total	**16**	**100.0%**
Civil status	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Single	5	31.3%
Married	10	62.5%
Separated	1	6.3%
Total	**16**	**100.0%**
Highest Educational Status	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Doctorate Degree	4	25.0%
Doctorate Degree-Units	4	25.0%
Master's Degree	6	37.5%
Master's Degree-CAR	2	12.5%
Total	**16**	**100.0%**
Position/ Designation	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Principal I-II	11	68.8%
Head Teacher IV-VI	2	12.5%
Head Teacher I-III	3	18.8%
Total	**16**	**100.0%**
Length of Administrative experience	**Frequency**	**Percent**
10-19	6	37.5%
<10	10	62.5%
Total	**16**	**100.0%**
Number of relevant seminars/ trainings attended	**Frequency**	**Percent**
International	4	25.0%
National	10	62.5%
Region	2	12.5%
Total	**16**	**100.0%**

The teachers show a mostly mid-career age profile, with many in their 30s and 40s, suggesting a stable and productive workforce. The group is predominantly female, reflecting long-

standing trends in education, and most are married, indicating stability and strong community ties. Many have pursued postgraduate studies, showing a solid commitment to professional growth. Most teachers hold the Teacher III rank, with fewer Master Teachers to lead instructional mentoring. Their teaching experience is well-balanced across early, mid, and veteran levels. Training participation is mostly at the regional and division levels, with limited national or international exposure, suggesting strong local engagement but fewer opportunities to explore broader educational practices.

TABLE 2. FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION ON THE DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF TEACHERS

Age	Frequency	Percent
56-62	13	11.6%
49-55	17	15.2%
42-48	34	30.4%
35-41	27	24.1%
28-34	21	18.8%
Total	**112**	**100.0%**
Sex	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Male	16	14.3%
Female	96	85.7%
Total	**112**	**100.0%**
Civil Status	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Single	14	12.5%
Married	91	80.4%
Widowed	4	3.6%
Separated	3	2.7%
Total	**112**	**99.1%**
Highest Educational Attainment	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Doctorate Degree-Units	4	3.6%
Master's Degree	35	31.3%
Master's Degree-CAR	42	37.5%
Master's Degree-Units	14	12.5%
Bachelor's Degree	17	15.2%
Total	**112**	**100.0%**
Position/Designation	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Master Teacher I	10	8.9%
Teacher III	59	52.7%
Teacher II	15	13.4%
Teacher I	28	25.0%
Total	**112**	**100.0%**

Position/Designation	Frequency	Percent
20>	27	24.1%
10-19	43	38.4%
<10	42	37.5%
Total	**112**	**100.0%**

Number of relevant seminars/ trainings attended	Frequency	Percent
International	1	.9%
National	17	15.2%
Region	71	63.4%
Division	23	20.5%
Total	**112**	**100.0%**

Summary of Findings

The findings show that school heads feel most autonomous in professional development and assessment-related decisions, while they experience less freedom in curriculum and instructional matters. With a grand mean of 3.44, overall autonomy is rated "High," though the variability in responses suggests experiences differ across individuals. This pattern highlights that while heads feel genuinely empowered in some areas, their autonomy in others remains limited, making it uneven across domains. Still, the stronger areas can serve as starting points for building more meaningful and balanced autonomy school-wide.

TABLE 3. SUMMARY RESULTS ON SCHOOL HEADS' PERCEIVED STATUS OF THE EDUCATIONAL AUTONOMY

Indicators	Mean	sd	Interpretation
Professional Development Control	3.76	0.77	High
Assessment Design Autonomy	3.54	0.62	High
Instructional Strategy Flexibility	3.40	0.87	Moderate
Curriculum Decision-Making Autonomy	3.04	1.07	Moderate
Grand Mean	**3.44**	**0.83**	**High**

Legend   Range   Description
4.21-5.00   Very High
3.41-4.20   High
2.61-3.40   Moderate
1.81-2.60   Low
1.00-1.80   Very Low

Summary of Findings

The results show that teachers experience moderate overall autonomy (grand mean = 3.33), feeling most empowered in professional development and assessment, but much less so in instructional strategies and especially curriculum decisions. While they have some freedom in how they teach, they have limited say in what they teach, which can hinder their ability to tailor learning to students' needs. This uneven distribution of autonomy suggests that strengthening teacher influence in curriculum and instructional planning could greatly improve teaching quality and better support meaningful learning.

TABLE 4. SUMMARY RESULTS ON TEACHERS' PERCEIVED STATUS OF THE EDUCATIONAL AUTONOMY

Indicators	Mean	Sd	Interpretation
Professional Development Control	3.52	0.73	High
Assessment Design Autonomy	3.48	0.73	High
Instructional Strategy Flexibility	3.32	0.86	Moderate
Curriculum Decision-Making Autonomy	3.01	1.06	Moderate
Grand Mean	**3.33**	**0.85**	**Moderate**

Legend	Range	Description
	4.21-5.00	Very High
	3.41-4.20	High
	2.61-3.40	Moderate
	1.81-2.60	Low
	1.00-1.80	Very Low

School heads rate curriculum standards compliance the highest, showing strong adherence to national guidelines, while accountability in instructional reporting, learner monitoring, and teacher supervision remains only moderate. With a grand mean of 3.22, overall accountability is also moderate, indicating that schools lean more toward meeting requirements than strengthening instructional practices. This gap suggests a culture focused on compliance rather than genuine performance, where key processes like supervision and data-driven monitoring are not yet fully developed. To improve student outcomes, schools need to move beyond simply following standards and focus on building stronger, more consistent instructional support systems.

TABLE 5. SUMMARY RESULTS ON SCHOOL HEADS' PERCEIVED STATUS OF THE EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Indicators	Mean	sd	Interpretation
Curriculum Standards Compliance	3.53	0.82	High
Instructional Reporting and Documentation	3.18	0.79	Moderate
Learner Performance Monitoring	3.10	0.85	Moderate
Teacher Instructional Supervision	3.05	0.74	Moderate
Grand Mean	**3.22**	**0.80**	**Moderate**

Legend	Range	Description
	4.21-5.00	Very High
	3.41-4.20	High
	2.61-3.40	Moderate
	1.81-2.60	Low
	1.00-1.80	Very Low

In table 5 teachers perceive accountability as strongest in curriculum compliance (3.58) and learner performance monitoring (3.41), while supervision (3.04) and reporting/documentation (3.19) remain moderate, resulting in an overall moderate score of 3.31. This suggests that teachers feel confident in instructional and learner-focused practices but see gaps in administrative support and supervision. The findings highlight a common trend: schools emphasize direct teaching responsibilities while processes that support teacher development and data-driven planning are weaker. Strengthening these areas through training and system improvements could create a more balanced and effective accountability framework.

TABLE 6. SUMMARY RESULTS ON TEACHERS' STATUS OF THE EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Indicators	Mean	Sd	Interpretation
Curriculum Standards Compliance	3.58	0.64	High
Learner Performance Monitoring	3.41	0.58	High
Instructional Reporting and Documentation	3.19	0.67	Moderate
Teacher Instructional Supervision	3.04	0.57	Moderate
Grand Mean	**3.31**	**0.62**	**Moderate**

Legend	Range	Description
	4.21-5.00	Very High
	3.41-4.20	High
	2.61-3.40	Moderate
	1.81-2.60	Low
	1.00-1.80	Very Low

The regression analysis shows a moderately strong positive correlation ($R = 0.718$) between school heads' profile variables and their perceived educational accountability. While the R^2 of 0.516 suggests that these variables explain about 51.6% of the variation, the Adjusted R^2 drops sharply to 0.093, indicating that once the number of predictors is accounted for, the model explains only 9.3% of the variance. The standard error of 0.433 reflects a moderate spread between the predicted and actual accountability perceptions, highlighting limited predictive power despite the observed correlation.

TABLE 6 MODEL SUMMARY

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.718	.516	.093	.43297

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) results for the regression model testing the relationship between school heads' profile and their perceived educational accountability. The regression model yields an F-value of 1.218 and a p-value of 0.391, which is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This indicates that the model, taken as a whole, does not significantly explain the variance in the dependent variable. The sum of squares for regression (1.599) and residual (1.500) are relatively close, indicating limited explanatory gain by including the predictors. Hence, the regression model does not provide a statistically meaningful improvement over a model with no predictors.

TABLE 7 ANOVA ANALYSIS

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.599	7	.228	1.218	.391
	Residual	1.500	8	.187		
	Total	3.099	15			

Table 8 shows the regression coefficients and significance levels for school heads' profile variables in predicting perceived educational accountability, revealing that none—age, sex, civil status, education, position, experience, or trainings—were statistically significant (all $p > 0.05$). Although age had the highest beta (1.184), its p-value (.272) confirms it is not significant. These findings indicate that individual background characteristics have little impact on accountability perceptions, which are more likely shaped by systemic and contextual factors such as

institutional policies, leadership practices, and organizational culture, suggesting that reforms should focus on how schools are led rather than who leads them.

TABLE 8. MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS ON TEST OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TEACHERS' PROFILE AND THEIR PERCEIVED SCHOOL CLIMATE

Variables	Beta	p-value	Decision
Age	1.184	.272	Not Significant
Sex	-1.031	.240	Not Significant
Civil Status	-.899	.161	Not Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	.477	.611	Not Significant
Position/ Designation	-.070	.858	Not Significant
Length of Administrative Experience	.214	.729	Not Significant
Seminars/ Trainings	-.831	.328	Not Significant

Table 9 summarizes the regression analysis examining whether teachers' profiles predict their perceived educational autonomy. The results show a very weak correlation (R = 0.150) and a low R² of 0.023, meaning only 2.3% of the variance is explained by profile variables. The negative Adjusted R² (-0.044) and a high standard error (0.653) indicate poor predictive power and high variability between observed and predicted values. These findings suggest that teacher demographics—such as age, sex, civil status, or experience—do not meaningfully influence perceptions of autonomy, which are likely shaped more by school climate, leadership, and systemic factors rather than individual characteristics.

TABLE 9. MODEL SUMMARY

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.150	.023	-.044	.653

Table 10 presents the ANOVA results for the regression model linking teacher profiles to perceived educational autonomy, showing an F-value of 0.341 and a p-value of 0.933, indicating the model is statistically insignificant. The tiny sum of squares for regression (1.018) compared to the residual (43.919) further highlights the model's weakness. These results confirm that teacher demographics have negligible influence on autonomy perceptions, reinforcing the idea that institutional support, school leadership, and systemic factors play a far greater role. Any observed associations are likely due to chance, emphasizing that policies should target school capacity and leadership practices rather than individual teacher characteristics.

TABLE 10. ANOVA ANALYSIS

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.018	7	.145	.341	.933
	Residual	43.919	103	.426		
	Total	44.936	110			

Table 11 shows the regression coefficients for individual teacher profile variables in predicting perceived educational autonomy, revealing that none are statistically significant (all $p > 0.05$). Even the highest beta, for seminars/trainings ($\beta = 0.296$, $p = 0.234$), is not meaningful. Age, sex, education, and position similarly do not predict autonomy perceptions, indicating that teacher background characteristics do not explain variations in how autonomy is experienced. These findings suggest that perceptions of autonomy are shaped more by school-wide systems and institutional practices than by individual traits, highlighting the need for policies that empower all teachers collectively and ensure real decision-making authority rather than relying on demographic or professional profiles.

TABLE 11. MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS ON TEST OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PROFILE OF THE TEACHERS AND THEIR PERCEIVED STATUS OF THE EDUCATIONAL AUTONOMY

Variables	Beta	p-value	Decision
Age	.049	.845	Not Significant
Sex	-.040	.852	Not Significant
Civil Status	-.100	.556	Not Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	-.122	.640	Not Significant
Position/ Designation	-.170	.505	Not Significant
Length of Teaching Experience	.074	.777	Not Significant
Seminars/ Trainings	.296	.234	Not Significant

Table 12 summarizes the regression analysis of school heads' profile variables and their perceived educational accountability. While the correlation (R = 0.591) suggests a moderate relationship, the R² of 0.350 and negative Adjusted R² (-0.220) indicate the model is weak and likely overfitted, with much of the variability unexplained (standard error = 0.561). This shows that personal characteristics like age, sex, education, and training are not reliable predictors of accountability perceptions. Instead, contextual and organizational factors play a larger role, supporting the SAWA framework's emphasis on institutional and policy-level mechanisms. Systemic reforms, rather than changes based on individual profiles, are therefore more effective in strengthening educational accountability among school leaders.

TABLE 12. MODEL SUMMARY

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.591	.350	-.220	.561

Table 13 shows the ANOVA results testing the regression model from Table 42, with an F-value of 0.614 and a p-value of 0.733, indicating the model is not statistically significant. The

small regression sum of squares (1.354) compared to the residual (2.519) confirms that the seven profile variables collectively explain little of the variance in perceived accountability. This underscores that demographic and professional characteristics of school heads have minimal impact on accountability perceptions. Instead, effective accountability relies on institutional support, leadership frameworks, and school-based systems, highlighting the need for reforms that strengthen structures and processes rather than focusing on individual profiles.

TABLE 13. ANOVA ANALYSIS

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	1.354	7	.193	.614	.733
	Residual	2.519	8	.315		
	Total	3.873	15			

Table 14 presents the regression coefficients for individual profile variables on school heads' perceptions of accountability, showing that none are statistically significant (all p > 0.05). Even the highest beta, Sex (β = 1.156, p = 0.255), is far from significant, and factors like seminars/trainings or length of experience also show no meaningful effect. These findings suggest that accountability perceptions are shaped more by external pressures, organizational norms, and system-level practices than by individual attributes. Effective reforms should therefore focus on institutionalizing standards, strengthening leadership systems, and providing context-relevant professional development, rather than relying on background characteristics. This underscores the need for autonomy to be supported by system-driven accountability mechanisms for meaningful school improvement.

TABLE 14. MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS ON TEST OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PROFILE OF THE SCHOOL HEADS AND THEIR PERCEIVED STATUS OF THE EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Variables	Beta	p-value	Decision
Age	-.699	.564	Not Significant
Sex	1.156	.255	Not Significant
Civil Status	-.502	.478	Not Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	.314	.771	Not Significant
Position/ Designation	-.122	.788	Not Significant
Length of Administrative Experience	-.683	.353	Not Significant
Seminars/ Trainings	.378	.693	Not Significant

Table 15 summarizes the regression analysis of teachers' profile variables and their perceived educational accountability, showing a very weak correlation (R = 0.214) and a low R^2 of 0.046. The negative Adjusted R^2 (-0.019) and moderate standard error (0.390) indicate the model has little predictive power. These findings suggest that individual characteristics such as age, gender, experience, or qualifications do not meaningfully influence accountability perceptions. Instead, systemic factors, school policies, and leadership practices play a larger role, highlighting that reforms should focus on shared professional culture, collaboration, and instructional leadership rather than tailoring interventions based on teacher profiles.

TABLE 15. MODEL SUMMARY

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.214	.046	-.019	.390

Table 16 presents the ANOVA results, showing that the regression model is not statistically significant (F = 0.708, p = 0.665). The small regression sum of squares (0.754) compared to the residual (15.654) and the low mean square (0.108) indicate that teacher profile variables like age, sex, and experience do not meaningfully predict perceptions of educational accountability. These

results highlight that improving accountability depends on structural and cultural practices within schools rather than individual characteristics. Systematic implementation of performance reviews, reporting systems, and data transparency—applied consistently across all teachers—is key, emphasizing the importance of school-wide and team-based accountability mechanisms.

TABLE 16. ANOVA ANALYSIS

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	.754	7	.108	.708	.665
	Residual	15.654	103	.152		
	Total	16.408	110			

Table 17 shows the regression coefficients for teachers' profile variables, revealing that none are statistically significant (p-values 0.094–0.980). The closest, Highest Educational Attainment (β = -0.434, p = 0.094), is still not significant, suggesting that even higher education does not meaningfully predict accountability perceptions. Age, sex, and trainings likewise show no effect. These results indicate that teacher characteristics have little influence on accountability, which is instead shaped by school culture, leadership, and consistent administrative practices. For meaningful improvement, policies should focus on systemic, context-driven accountability structures rather than individual traits or qualifications.

TABLE 17. MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS ON TEST OF RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PROFILE OF THE TEACHERS AND THEIR PERCEIVED STATUS OF THE EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Variables	Beta	p-value	Decision
Age	.249	.312	Not Significant
Sex	-.241	.256	Not Significant
Civil Status	-.004	.980	Not Significant
Highest Educational Attainment	-.434	.094	Not Significant
Position/ Designation	.241	.341	Not Significant
Length of teaching Experience	-.116	.653	Not Significant
Seminars/ Trainings	.252	.305	Not Significant

Discussion

The study shows that demographic and professional profiles of teachers and school heads—such as age, sex, civil status, education, position, and experience—have little impact on how they perceive educational autonomy and accountability. Instead, perceptions are more likely shaped by school culture, leadership practices, and broader policy contexts rather than individual traits.

Teachers and school heads both see educational autonomy as an interconnected whole. For teachers, control over curriculum, instructional methods, assessment, and professional development are linked, while school heads view instructional design and curriculum decisions as mutually reinforcing. This suggests educators experience autonomy as a broad, integrated set of responsibilities rather than isolated decisions.

Educational accountability, by contrast, is viewed as a structured system involving learner monitoring, supervision, and reporting. While distinct from autonomy, its relationship with autonomy is nuanced. Some aspects of autonomy align with accountability, while others, particularly curriculum control, may conflict with centralized requirements.

Areas like assessment design and professional development appear to bridge autonomy and accountability. Teachers with more involvement in these areas tend to engage more with accountability expectations, suggesting that granting agency in key professional domains can enhance alignment with institutional goals. This challenges the idea that autonomy and accountability are inherently at odds.

Curriculum decision-making autonomy, however, often shows weaker or negative links to accountability, reflecting tension between top-down mandates and teachers' desire for localized, context-responsive instruction. Limited input in curriculum design may lead educators to feel constrained by rigid policies.

For school heads, the patterns are similar: autonomy and accountability are internally coherent, but profile variables do not significantly influence perceptions. This indicates that professional perceptions are shaped more by institutional dynamics and governance structures than by individual characteristics. Although the sample size is limited, the findings offer insight into how leadership and professional agency are experienced within schools.

Another critical observation lies in the potential for professional development to serve as a catalyst for reconciling autonomy and accountability. When teachers or leaders have control over their professional growth opportunities, they tend to engage more positively with accountability structures. This reinforces the idea that meaningful professional learning is not merely about compliance but about empowerment. When professional development aligns with real classroom or leadership challenges, it enhances educators' capacity to respond constructively to performance metrics and evaluation standards.

Despite the observed synergies, the findings also underscore the importance of trust, support, and policy coherence in balancing autonomy and accountability. The presence of strong accountability systems without sufficient autonomy may lead to resentment, burnout, or superficial compliance. Conversely, autonomy without accountability mechanisms can result in inconsistency, fragmentation, or a lack of shared goals. Therefore, both concepts must be developed in tandem, not as competing agendas, but as mutually reinforcing strategies for professional growth and educational improvement.

The data align with global discussions around the need to reimagine governance in education systems. As many countries adopt school autonomy with accountability (SAWA) models, there is growing recognition that institutional culture, leadership capacity, and teacher agency are critical to success. The findings from this study offer empirical support for such perspectives, suggesting that autonomy and accountability are most effective when framed not as hierarchical controls but as collaborative processes. This calls for a shift in educational leadership toward distributed, participatory, and responsive management that values professional judgment.

The findings of this research reveal a complex but promising relationship between educational autonomy and accountability in both teaching and school leadership. Rather than existing in tension, these constructs can complement one another when supported by institutional trust, thoughtful policy design, and meaningful professional development. Moving forward, education systems would benefit from strategies that not only measure performance but also cultivate professional agency, ensuring that both accountability and autonomy work together to drive sustainable improvement in teaching and learning.

Summary of Findings

Educational autonomy and accountability are twin pillars of effective school governance. Autonomy allows schools and educators to make context-specific decisions that are responsive to the unique needs of their learners. Accountability, on the other hand, ensures that these decisions are transparent, results-driven, and aligned with national educational goals. However, many school heads and teachers struggle to find a balance between these two due to lack of guidance, training, and systemic support.

Research has shown that schools with higher levels of autonomy coupled with clear accountability mechanisms often perform better in terms of student outcomes. When educators are empowered to lead instructional innovations and manage resources effectively, they become more invested in the success of their students and the school as a whole. However, autonomy without accountability may lead to inconsistency, while accountability without autonomy can reduce morale and innovation.

This program is designed to address these challenges by providing school heads and teachers with the tools, knowledge, and collaborative platforms necessary to sustain professional autonomy while upholding accountability. It aims to cultivate a professional culture that promotes ownership of learning outcomes, encourages critical reflection, and supports evidence-based decision-making.

Moreover, the program recognizes the need to build trust in accountability systems.

Teachers and administrators often perceive evaluations as punitive, leading to resistance and compliance-based behaviors rather than growth-oriented change. This initiative seeks to reframe accountability as a developmental tool that supports continuous improvement.

A strong emphasis will be placed on reflective practice, peer learning, and the use of data for informed decision-making. By encouraging school heads and teachers to regularly assess their practices, identify gaps, and implement corrective strategies, the program promotes a cycle of improvement that is sustainable and contextually grounded.

Another key component is the promotion of shared governance. Decision-making should not rest solely on the school head; involving teachers in planning, budgeting, curriculum development, and policy implementation strengthens democratic participation and institutional trust. This model enhances both vertical and horizontal accountability within the school system.

The activities in this program are designed to be participatory, context-driven, and action-oriented. By integrating training sessions, mentoring, workshops, and performance reviews, the program creates an ecosystem where autonomy and accountability are not competing forces but complementary dynamics.

Furthermore, building leadership capacity, professional collaboration, and a culture of responsibility, this program aims to create schools that are not only compliant but also creative, empowered, and effective in delivering quality education for all learners.

IV.   CONCLUSION

Based on the findings and discussions, it can be concluded that the perceived status of educational autonomy and accountability among teachers and school heads is shaped more by institutional practices and professional dynamics than by individual demographic profiles. While autonomy and accountability are often viewed as contrasting forces, this study reveals that they can coexist and even reinforce one another when educators are given meaningful roles in assessment, instructional decisions, and professional development. Strong correlations within each

domain suggest internal coherence, while select cross-domain relationships highlight opportunities for synergy, particularly through professional empowerment. The results emphasize the need for balanced governance structures that support educator agency while maintaining clear accountability standards ultimately promoting a more responsive and effective educational environment.

V.   RECOMMENDATIONS

➢ Education authorities should provide continuous, relevant, and well-structured training programs that empower teachers and school heads to exercise autonomy in curriculum design, assessment practices, and instructional strategies while aligning with accountability requirements.

➢ Schools should institutionalize shared governance practices that involve teachers and school leaders in key decisions. This collaborative approach enhances ownership, builds trust, and ensures that accountability measures are informed by practical classroom realities.

➢ Policy frameworks should clearly define the balance between autonomy and accountability, ensuring educators have the flexibility to innovate while being guided by measurable and realistic standards of performance and reporting.

➢ Accountability mechanisms should not only evaluate outcomes but also provide constructive feedback and resources to help schools improve. These systems should be developmental in nature rather than punitive, fostering a growth mindset among educators.

➢ Teachers and school heads should be trained and encouraged to use performance data to inform their decisions. Creating a culture of reflective practice enhances professional judgment and supports the alignment of instructional practices with accountability goals.

➢ Leadership training programs should be designed to equip school heads with the capacity to balance administrative accountability with instructional leadership, enabling them to support their teams in achieving both compliance and innovation.

➢ Governments and educational agencies should work to build trust in accountability systems by ensuring transparency in evaluation processes, fairness in judgments, and active

communication with stakeholders at all levels.

➢ Policymakers should recognize the diversity of school environments and avoid one-size-fits-all approaches. Autonomy and accountability policies must be adaptable to local contexts to remain effective and equitable.

➢ Schools should be encouraged to form learning communities where educators can share best practices, collaborate on problem-solving, and learn from one another's experiences in managing autonomy and accountability.

➢ Teachers, school heads, parents, and students should be consulted and involved in shaping the policies that govern autonomy and accountability to ensure they are practical, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of the school community.

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