INSPIRE — Innovative Governance Practices in the Higher Education Institutions

Webinar on:

ACCOUNTABILITY ISSUES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

UNIVERSITÀ DI SIENA 1240

DISAG
DIPARTIMENTO DI STUDI AZIENDALI E GIURIDICI

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THE (A) NOTION

- Accountability is an interdisciplinary concept
- Its core notion refers to a **coordination mechanism** that takes the form of a <u>social relationship</u> in which one of the parties (*accountor*) recognizes the "necessity" to explain and justify its conduct (to give account) to a second subject (*accountee*).

answerability for a conduct

| Accountor | | Accountee |

judgement
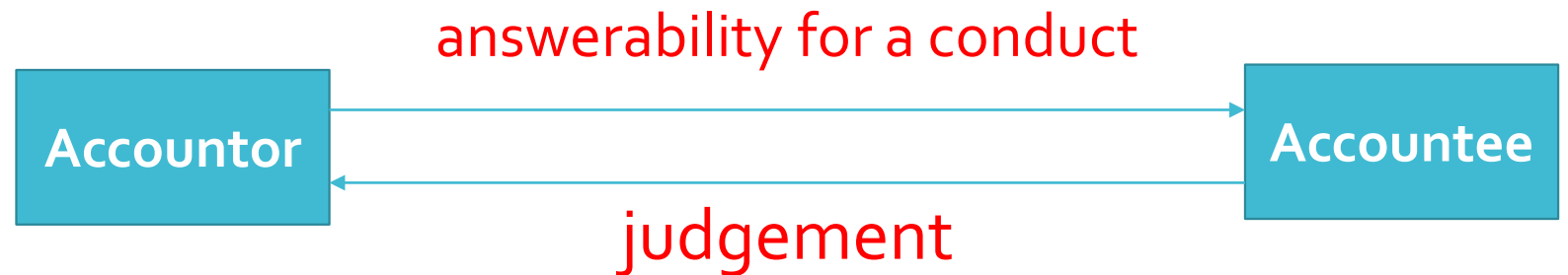
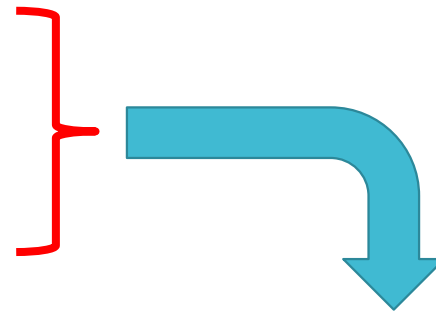## THE ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESS

- Accountability can be envisioned as a process articulated in 3 phases.

- Accountability is not only connected to compliance and responsiveness (being held to and taking account of) but also concerns transparency (giving accounts).

| Information | → | Debate | → | Consequences |

Questions to answer

Accountability

- For what?
- To whom?

By what means?

Accountor	Accountee	Object
Professor	Student	Punctuality
Department	Central Administration	Use of the resources (efficiency, effectiveness)
University	Local Firms	Local Development

Simple examples

By what means

- Means, in brief, are:
  - Channel of communication
  - Language

- Languages and channels condition each other

- Languages and channels of communication must be chosen according to:
  - the subject to which one we are accountable and
  - the object for which we are accountable to the specific subject.

CAVEAT

- The behaviour has not its opposite.

- If we accept that the whole behaviour in an interactive system has the value of a message – that is communication – it follows that, however we try, we cannot not communicate.

ACCOUNTABILITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- In a given organization, accountability relationships are not alternative to each other and can be held for a variety of purposes.

- Decentralization and increased autonomy in HE shift the structures of accountability relationships (subject, objects, means).

- Autonomy and accountability are strictly connected.

HOW TO DEAL WITH ACCOUNTABILITY ISSUES IN HE

HE organizations should:

- understand the key accountability relationships in which they are involved (**to whom**)

- identify the content through which different accountability demands can be addressed (**for what**)

- Choose (when possible) the «right» channel and language (**by what means**)

- Define a strategy to manage the web of accountability relationships in a way to mitigate the possible overloading of activities (e.g., internal and external reporting)

- Develop managerial competencies to address the former.