

ISSN: 2395-5929

# EMPEROR INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT RESEARCH [EIJFMR]



UGC Jr.No.: 45308



Scientific Journal Impact Factor

SJIF 2017-4.253

SJIF 2016-3.343



IFS: 1.14



ISI 2017-2018: 0.673

**Volume - IV Issue - 01 January - 2018**



**Published by**  
Mayas Publication®

Tamilnadu | Kerala | Karnataka | New Delhi

[www.eijfmr.com](http://www.eijfmr.com)

[maya1984kannan@gmail.com](mailto:maya1984kannan@gmail.com) / [editoreijfmr@gmail.com](mailto:editoreijfmr@gmail.com) / [customersupport@eijfmr.com](mailto:customersupport@eijfmr.com)

# ***PUBLIC SERVICE ACCOUNTABILITY IN A PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY***

**Dr. S. L. SREEKUMAR**  
Assistant Professor and Head  
Department of Political Science  
Panampilly Memorial Government College  
Chalakkudy, Thrissur, Kerala- 680722

## **Abstract**

*In India widely recognized that governance today faces a serious crisis of accountability. The very fact that despite significant economic growth, and substantial increases in social sector expenditures, India continues to perform far worse than countries much poorer than her on key development parameters is an indicator of just how deep the problem of accountability is. The paper makes the uses of secondary sources from published and unpublished journals and reports. The study briefly discussing on Understanding Accountability, Weak accountability of policy makers In India, Weak Accountability of service providers, Institutional design for Accountability, Regular, reliable and relevant information, Why Accountability, The Bases of Legitimacy, The Legislative Rationale, The Control or Accountability Rationale, Parliament Democracy with respect to the Public service accountability*

**Key Words:** *Public Service Accountability, Parliament, Democracy*

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

It is widely recognized that governance in India today faces a serious crisis of accountability. The very fact that despite significant economic growth, and substantial increases in social sector expenditures, India

continues to perform far worse than countries much poorer than her on key development parameters is an indicator of just how deep the problem of accountability is. Accountability failures have meant that absenteeism, incompetence, inefficiency and corruption characterize every core service that the state is obliged to deliver to its citizens. This discussion note examines the crisis of accountability in the context of the Indian civil services. It argues for the importance of creating mechanisms for direct accountability of the civil services to citizens and attempts a preliminary articulation of mechanisms and instruments by which this accountability can be achieved. Hence the study attempts to the public service accountability and parliamentary democracy in India.

## **II. UNDERSTANDING ACCOUNTABILITY**

A diagnostic Accountability can broadly be defined as the obligation of those holding power to take responsibility and be held answerable for their behavior and actions. This obligation might stem out of a moral-

ethical need to account for one's behavior, or out of a legal requirement. It is a relational concept, as it concerns the relationship between those that perform an action or deliver a service and those on whom the service has an effect. At its core accountability can be conceptualized in terms of principles and agents, where accountability is a relationship between a principal X and an agent Y acting on behalf of Principal X.<sup>1</sup> There are two critical elements to actualizing this notion of accountability. The first is the question of determining who should be accountable to whom and for what? Second is that of developing institutional mechanisms and an incentive structure for sanctions and rewards on the basis of which accountability is realized. Accordingly, accountability has an answerability element- the need for justification of actions, and an enforcement element- the sanctions that can be imposed if actions or justifications are judged unsatisfactory.

### III. WEAK ACCOUNTABILITY OF POLICY MAKERS IN INDIA

Mechanisms for ensuring external accountability of policy makers are extremely limited. Emanating in part as a consequence of its colonial legacy which necessitated an opaque administration that

was distanced from its people - administrative or civil service accountability in India has always been internal. External accountability is conceptualized in the narrow framework of elections and demanded specifically of elected representatives. In this framework, civil service accountability to the people is at best 'indirect' through accountability to the political class. This notion has two problems worth highlighting. First, it erodes accountability of the civil services for policy related decisions and relevant outcomes. The civil services, particularly at the higher echelons of the administrative hierarchy play a critical role both in determining policy choices as well as charting the course through which policy is implemented. Internal accountability insulates the policy making process- basis on which decisions are taken, standards set and performance judged- from public scrutiny. This results in information asymmetries. Citizens have no means of accessing information on how decisions are made or on the basis of decisions. Moreover, there are no mechanisms for measuring outcomes of policy decisions as there is no information on standards and goals that policies seek to achieve. As a result, accountability breaks down. Overlaid on this, is the hierarchical

nature of the bureaucracy which privileges a top down approach to policy making. In this framework, power is centralized at the level of the line agency which sets service standards and at the same time tightly controls the implementation, including resource allocation, of services. There are many problems with this approach. From the perspective of accountability, its greatest failing has been the complete absence of citizens' participation in bureaucratic decision making. Consequently, policies and programs bear little resemblance to citizen's needs and preferences. Box 1 examines this problem illustratively through the lens of the evolution on policy to address the sanitation problem. It highlights that top down approaches can result in the wrong problem being addressed leading to a complete disconnect between stated outcomes and real impact of policies. Consequently, accountability suffers.

#### IV. WEAK ACCOUNTABILITY OF SERVICE PROVIDERS

As mentioned, for the long route of accountability to be realized, policy makers must be able to activate internal accountability mechanisms and create institutional incentives, through which providers act in the interests of people and accountability is ensured. A key element of

ensuring accountability is the ability of policy makers to monitor service provision and institutionalize incentives for performance. In administrative and managerial parlance, this refers to the 'contract' or 'compact' between policy makers, line departments and front-line service providers on the basis of which services are delivered. As the history of implementation of programs and schemes in India amply demonstrates, the sheer size and scale of government operations makes direct monitoring- even for the best intentioned civil servant- of the front-line service provider almost impossible. On occasions where monitoring does happen, it is undertaken necessarily on the basis of inputs – buildings built, roads constructed, hand pumps constructed, rather than on outcomes of what these buildings, roads and hand pumps yield. Thus performance, when judged, is not based on any 'real' indicators of service provision removing any real incentive for performance.

#### V. INSTITUTIONAL DESIGN FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Some analytical considerations In the previous section we addressed the question of whom the civil services ought to be accountable to. In the next two sections we deal with the more practical challenge of

designing an institutional structure through which accountability to the people can be realized. One way of thinking about this is to go back to first principles. What are the key underlying analytical criteria on the basis of which accountability to people can be ensured? We identify two key characteristics of an accountable system.

### **Regular, Reliable and Relevant Information**

As the previous discussion highlighted, informational asymmetries- lack of access to information on government processes and performance- lie at the heart of accountability failures. Transparency holds the key to strengthening accountability. The passage of the Right to Information Act in 2005 is a critical step in the direction of institutionalizing transparency in administrative structures. However, transparency while necessary is not itself sufficient to ensure accountability. For information to result in accountability it needs to be produced regularly, reliably and in a fashion that is relevant to citizens. Demystifying complex government records so that they are intelligible to citizens is key. For instance, access to complex budget documents or audit reports will play a limited role in strengthening accountability. However, if these reports are de-mystified,

using a non-technical vocabulary, they can be made relevant to citizens and accountability better enforced.

Clear delegation of roles and responsibilities with commensurate powers and resources: External accountability requires reorganizing internal administrative procedures and accountability mechanisms. One important aspect of this is to ensure that every level of the administrative system has clearly defined roles and responsibilities with goals that are clearly specified. This allows the possibility of affixing accountability to specific levels of administration as well as developing benchmarks on the basis of which performance can be judged.

### **Why Accountability**

A good deal of attention has recently been paid to the various means of rendering police forces accountable. This prompts the question whether accountability is the answer, and to which problems? In this paper it will be argued that there are a number of bases upon which support for policing can be founded and that accountability constitutes just one of these. The limitations of the major bases will be assessed as will the claims to support that modern police forces can make under the various headings. Recent changes in both

Impact Factor: 1.1111

policing and the criminal justice system will then be considered. It will be argued that such changes give accountability an increased, perhaps unbearable, burden in establishing the legitimacy of policing.

### **The Bases of Legitimacy**

The police constitute a public bureaucracy as does, for example, the Home Office, Inland Revenue or Independent Broadcasting Authority. To assess the legitimacy of such a bureaucracy is to judge the degree to which the institution is worthy of support and allegiance (Schaar, 1984). This is not, as has been pointed out (McAuslan and McEldowney, 1985), the same as asking whether the body is acting legally or constitutionally. There are five main headings under which claims to legitimacy are liable to be made and recognised (Stewart, 1975; Mashaw, 1985; Baldwin and McCrudden, 1981).

### **The Legislative Rationale**

This model bases claims to support on the existence of an authorising mandate from Parliament, the fountain of democratic authority within the state. Thus, the citizens control the legislature and through it the enforcers or administrators (Mashaw, 1985 p. 16)

## **The Control or Accountability Rationale**

Like the legislative rationale, this model derives legitimacy from the assent of the people but, instead of relying on the people's voice as expressed in Parliament, it looks to more narrowly-defined, but often representative, groupings.

The Due Process Rationale Support under this heading is merited by the use of procedures that gain consent. Thus, processes of participation, consultation and openness lend legitimacy to actions by allowing interest representation and by appealing directly to those parties liable to be affected by such action.

The Expertise Rationale Some regulatory or enforcement activities can be said to demand the exercise of judgment by experts. These tasks, the argument runs (see, for example, Landis, 1938), cannot be undertaken mechanistically and it is thus best to allocate them, unfettered by legal or other controls, to trained persons. The experts are thus to be judged by their results and often claim to improve in performance over time. 5. The Efficiency Rationale Two types of claim can be made under this heading, first, that statutory objectives are being pursued in an efficient manner, and

secondly, that economically efficient action is being taken and that this

### **Parliament Democracy with respect to the Public service accountability**

The pattern of parliamentary democracy as envisaged in the Republican constitution of India prescribes a secondary role and implies a subordinate status to the administration in comparison to the paramount position of the representative institutions of popular variety. Unlike United Kingdom, where the political institutions and bureaucratic organizations are equally developed and evenly balanced, the political scene in free India has maintained a rather uneasy truce. The experiment of adult suffrage in the early years of the Republic, kept her parliamentary institutions in a state of illegitimacy. This naturally led to a confrontation between the parliament and the administrative bureaucracy, whose colonial role stood sanctified with the traditions of elitist efficiency and generalist hegemony. The political masters of the nascent democracy found their public servants firmly entrenched in the saddle, taking pride in running the governments and districts at the exclusion of the institutions of local self-governments. In place of aiding and advising, the political masters, they have

been acting as correctives and even a substitute to truncated democracy, which the successive government of India Acts has brought in their wake. This unrepresentative and non-responsible character of public services in the past rendered the bureaucracy a paradise of the urban born and westernized intelligential, which operated as oligarchic elite in the name of merit. Its role was paramount and pivotal to the extent that it could not get the parliamentary institutions sacked or even dissolved under various pretexts of imperial safeguards.

It was quite heroic on the part of our founding fathers to derecognize this role of Indian bureaucracy and place it under a very tight and elaborate control mechanism of the Cabinet, the parliament, the courts and the people of the country. The Indian constitution no more recognizes it as a special group of privileged aristocrats and has preferred to remain silent after having provided the Constitution of public service commission's and All-India services. It has given a free hand to the political masters to legitimize their new role of disciplining the bureaucracy and has left the latter to discover and adjust itself with the new winds of political change as reflected in the parliaments. The political process of last 25 years has witnessed this dramatic role

reversal of parliament and the administration and today the parliamentary institutions stand firmly poised to control the administrative universe in a very purpose and meaningful manner.

#### VI. CONCLUSION

The Parliamentary public service and evidence are completed by the Parliament with the aid and assistance of its Public service authority of India. The reports provide tables in support of their conclusions on administrative inadequacies, often omitted in Committee reports. Public service accountability examines a very comprehensive field of administrative delinquency and provides a very fertile ground for legislative questioning and parliamentary debates on matters of public interest.

#### VII. CONCLUSION

1. Bayley, D. H. (1983). "Accountability and control of police: lessons for Britain" in Bennett, T. (ed) *The Future of Policing*, 146-162. Cropwood Conference Series No. 15, Cambridge: Institute of Criminology.

2. Bayley, D. H. and Bittner, E. (1985). "Learning the skills of policing", in special edition of *Journal of Law and Contemporary Social Problems* - "Discretion in Law Enforcement" ed. by R. J. Allen.

3. Association of Metropolitan Authorities (June 1981). *Working Party on Community Liaison and Related Legislation*. A.M.A. Police Pan.

4. K. P. Jose  
and Audit in  
Weekly, Vol.22, No.  
5. George, A  
can only do so mu  
human resourc  
government heal  
International Jo  
Management, 24