

# REVITALISING ACCOUNTABILITY IN PUBLIC MANAGEMENT REFORM: ISSUES AND CHALLENGES FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

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## ABSTRACT

As the public sector character and attributes continue to evolve globally, the notion of accountability is identified as the pivot, around which effective public management and good governance revolve. This has followed the wave of neo-liberal reforms in Africa and elsewhere in the developing countries, where the re-invention of government in recent years has earmarked accountability as part of the governance and development imperatives. This article critically analysis the dynamics of accountability in public sector reforms and evaluates its significance in improving efficiency and effectiveness in the public sector. A thorough examination on the practicality of the different accountability mechanisms and relationships is made to provide a case, as to whether the prescribed patterns of accountability under the *new managerialism* rekindle better hope for developing countries.

The theoretical foundations and issues that underpin public sector accountability are provided, before engaging its unfolding dynamics and challenges. It is then argued that, whereas the need exists to transform public accountability mechanisms to foster continuous improvement. Those who inspect, audit and review public service management should be able to appreciate the constraints under which public servants operate, and the circumstances in which they have little or no control. The business-like performance measures are important in spearheading output and outcome orientations. However, the traditional public service values

such as impartiality, representation, integrity, fairness, welfare and justice, should not be abandoned since they represent the basic requirement eliciting public interest.

## INTRODUCTION

Public sector accountability is an integral part of government and public management. If government relates to the way how power, authority and resources are utilised in the achievement of societal or developmental objectives, then the level of accountability of any institution or organisation (public, private business or non-governmental) must be a key indicator as to whether, that entity nurtures good or poor government. The clamour for *good governance* remains a cherished ideal in the effort to overcome the socio-economic and political impediments to development that have rocked, especially the developing world for decades.

Governments are increasingly under pressure not only to be efficient and productive, but also to secure outcomes in terms of economic and social development. This need has precipitated most public sector reforms, whose strategies have had a bottom-line intent to change the culture and context within which public managers conduct their duties, so as to increase government's efficiency, effectiveness and accountability. In this regard, accountability has become the cornerstone of public government and management because, it constitutes the principle that informs the processes in which those who hold and exercise public authority can be held responsible or answerable for their actions or inactions (Aucoin *et al.*, 2000: 45).

The significance of accountability manifests to serve essentially three core purposes (Aucoin *et al.*, 2000: 45): to *control* for the abuse and misuse of public authority; to provide *assurance* in respect to the use of public resources and adherence to the law and public service values; and to promote learning in pursuit of *continuous improvement* in governance and public management. This explains the existence of an array of accountability processes and mechanisms in all systems, which serve to control behaviour and performance towards organisational objectives, and to provide assurance to principals that their agents are fulfilling their responsibilities as intended. Accountability as continuous improvement implies that, the process is a learning one and that dynamism towards change and improvement must be embraced to keep afloat with the emerging challenges of all time.

The above highlights ensuing debate addressing in this article. The article captures major debates on the relevance and fate of accountability in contemporary public sector management. This is done by examining the unfolding accountability mechanisms and relationships under the new approach to public sector government. However, before this is done, it is necessary to provide highlights on the theoretical orientation and issues that underpin the notion of public sector accountability.

## CONCEPTUALISING PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

The concept of accountability<sup>1</sup> is a universally accepted standard for Public Administration in theory and practice, although its meaning and institutional application may vary from one place or one institution to another. Traditionally, accountability involves individual or group responsibility for performance of specified duties. As time passes, the notion continues to evolve, with accountability requirements extending in pursuit of democratic reform, public sector responsiveness and improved performance.

Fox and Meyer (1995: 2) define accountability as the *responsibility of government and its agents towards the public to achieve previously set objectives and to account for them in public*. It is also regarded as a commitment required from public officials individually and collectively to accept public responsibility for their action or inaction. In this case the burden of accountability rests on each public functionary to act in the *public interest* and according to his or her conscience, with solutions for every matter based on professionalism and participation (Fox and Meyer, 1995: 5). Haque (2000: 612) considers accountability from the entire governmental system as the *answerability of public officials to the public for their actions and inactions for which they are subject to both external and internal sanctions*. In the same vein, Basu Rumki considers public accountability as the liability of government servants to expose, explain and justify actions taken on behalf of delivering services to the public (Basu, 2000: 472).

In general, accountability can be understood as the answerability for performance and the obligation that public functionaries (elected and appointed officials) have, to give a satisfactory explanation to the public (tax payers) over the exercise of power, authority and resources entrusted to them. The following elements/ tenets can capture the concept of accountability:

- undertaking official decisions/ activities in a transparent way- capturing various stakeholders' interests;
- optimum use of resources - taking consideration of *value for money* and cost-benefit analysis, with no tolerance to waste and corruption;
- adherence to ethical and professional standards and regulations;
- responsiveness to community needs as much as possible with prioritisation;
- viable mechanisms of providing feedback and information to the public;
- effort to foster awareness and civil society participation.

## THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Public accountability derives strong roots from democratic traditions, and the constitutional/ legal framework of a given country or organisation. The rules, regulations and standard procedures are important benchmarks for guiding public officials' actions and behaviour, given that public officials play an agent role – agents of the people. The inherent high degree of regulations in the public sector dictates that, such agencies must operate, as expressions of the will of the people (Pauw, *et al.*,

2002:134). Likewise, the nature of the existing society and organisational culture shapes the behavioural patterns and values attached to public service.

Accountability is an ethical virtue, since ethics concern principles and rules that govern the moral value of people's behaviour. Improving ethics is crucial to enhance accountability and *vice versa*. Ethical values such as integrity, probity, impartiality and frugality, etc. form part of the common values, which guide public sector action and performance. Unethical practice constitutes a great deal of behavioural attitude and actions, which include; dishonesty, laziness, negligence, inefficiency or complacency on the part of public officials, as well as fraud and corruption.

When the notion of accountability is espoused, three important questions arise: accountable *to whom*; *for what*; and *how*? These issues amplify three main dimensions: the *agents of accountability* (accountable to whom); *the standards of accountability* (accountability for what); and the *means of accountability* (how accountability is ensured).

The agents of accountability from whom authorised relationships is derived include supervisors, elected chief executives and legislators, the courts, external auditing agencies, professional associations, co-workers, clients and the general public (Romzek, 2000: 22). The standards of accountability have conventionally been attached to achievement of social economic progress in the form of law and order, poverty alleviation, employment generation, public well-being; and the maintenance of values such as integrity, equality, impartiality, representation and justice etc. (Haque, 2000: 601). The means of accountability include: *external* mechanisms, including legislative instruments, political executive means, judicial or quasi judicial processes, as well as public hearings, interest groups, and media scrutiny; *internal* mechanisms, including official rules, codes of conduct, official hierarchies, and performance reviews; and others like organisational culture and professional ethics (Haque, 2000: 606).

It should be stressed that, the foundation of the public sector is service-oriented, as opposed to the private sector (which, although it may also be service oriented, is profit-oriented, whose key objective rotates around earning a satisfactory return on investment and being able to finance operations for a predictable future) – management performance in the public sector realm is not measurable in profit terms. Rather, it is measurable in terms of the 3Es; *economy*, *efficiency*, *effectiveness* and *appropriateness*, which emphasise the following (Pauw, *et al.*, 2002: 138-139):

**Economy** is concerned with minimising the cost of resources used for an activity and having regard to the appropriate quality. Hence economy is simply the principle of being cost sensitive, requiring that the cost of inputs compares favourably with the alternative.

**Efficiency** relates to achieving maximum output from a given amount of resources used. It is the relationship between the output in terms of goods and services and the resources used to produce them (the ratio of output – input); whereby, the higher the ratio, the higher the efficiency.

**Effectiveness** is the extent to which an activity's stated objectives are achieved. It describes the relationship between intended impact and the actual impact on an activity. In essence, the above 3Es form part of the evaluation of public officials' performance but

at the same time supplements the basis of weighing accountability in the execution of public duties.

## FORMS OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY

**A**ccountability is a diverse notion that has political, legal, administrative and financial dimensions. There might be other different classifications depending on preference of approach and emphasis. In essence public accountability carries four main typologies including hierarchical, legal, political and professional forms.

### Hierarchical / Bureaucratic accountability

The hierarchical or bureaucratic accountability forms part of the classical type, operating in the conventional public administration schema, where accountability relationships follow a rather strict superior-subordinate hierarchy, and where the public servant is technically accountable through the leadership of the department/unit up to the top. It is an internal organisational form that utilises the organisational structure; lines of authority and official channels of communication. The accountability relationship is based on the internal controls through supervision of individuals with reliance on seniority of position arrangement.

Some of the usual manifestations of hierarchical accountability include immediate supervisors and periodic performance reviews, where individual evaluation is based on obedience and adherence to organisational directives, and other mechanisms that reduce employee discretion (Romzek, 2000: 24). Performance is also judged by how well administrators have utilised the inputs at their disposal such as effort, time, funds and workforce. It is more accustomed to stereotypes of designation and lines of reporting. It is hence an *input* control mechanism, meant to secure accountability from those conferred with or acting on delegated authority. The other manifestation involves the conventional practice where it is only the politically elected office bearers who are accountable to the public, while public servants are presumed to be neutral, anonymous and only responsible for implementing policies.

### Legal accountability

Legal accountability is a conventional type where accountability relationships involve a great deal of external oversight (by legislative and constitutional structures/agencies) such as parliamentary committees, the Ombudsman, Auditor-General and the Public Service Commission. to ensure that individual or group performance complies with established standards and performance mandates. It utilises externally derived expectations, where external agencies normally review and verify the quality of public management through processes like, financial or programme audits (Romzek, 2000: 25). Performance evaluation is thus based on adherence to mandated processes where administrative actions are weighed in compliance with formal performance systems. These include

both management and reporting systems as prescribed under the rules and standard procedures. The core *unit of value* is henceforth the *process* rather than the *output* and *outcomes* (see accountability relationships in Table 1.1).

**Table 1.1: Behavioural Expectations of different Accountability types and Managerial strategy**

Accountability	Behavioral expectation	Managerial Strategy
Hierarchical	Obedience to organizational directives	Inputs
Legal	Compliance with external mandates/ Rules/ Procedure	Process
Political	Responsiveness to key external stake-holders	Outputs
Professional	Expertise and individual/ professional judgment	Outcomes

*Adapted from Romzek, 2000*

Both the legal and hierarchical forms of accountability minimise discretion and appears to simplify the accountability process by prescribing standards. However, focussing on securing compliance with input control and process can be a great deterrent to procuring accountability for performance, especially in terms of output and outcomes. Moreover, emphasis on the process and legalities offer a viable excuse to public servants who may simply be reluctant to respond to critical citizen needs, only to claim that they are following rules and laid down procedures; and so the rules can provide some kind of *security* for incompetence (Guy Peters, 1995: 292).

### Political accountability

Political accountability forms the cornerstone of democratic practice where the mandates of elected office bearers and public administrators must reflect on the agenda and expectations of the public. The accountability relationships afford administrators the discretion of being responsive to the concerns of the key stakeholders, such as elected office bearers, and other social groups of the general public. Accountability is more people-focussed unlike the traditional model where accountability is through hierarchical leadership, with hardly any direct links with the people, either through consultative or through interest groups. Thus, it aims at greater responsiveness to meet citizen needs and active participation. Its performance measure is linked to the value of responsiveness to the constituents – the various stakeholders, where public employees are urged to

vigorously support their political leaders' agenda as part of their career objectives in serving the public interest.

However, political accountability tends to be affected by neo-patrimonial acquaintances, nepotism and seclusion which undermine the principle of responsiveness to the public. This quagmire is more exacerbated in the developing countries, where the constituencies of public organisations tend to be political, and where value systems are crowded by the patron-client orientations that serve to foster the interests of dictatorial regimes, than the larger public interest (Kakumba and Kuye, 2006: 813).

## Professional accountability

This is one of the accountability systems that are accorded increased advocacy in the recent reform strategies that are intended to promote flexibility and expertise in the public sector. Under professional accountability, public officials are expected to exercise their best judgement, achieve results, and therefore more *output and outcome-oriented* rather than mere following of rules and directives. This approach moves from the traditional approaches, by allowing substantial discretion to the individual or agency, and by way of emphasising that public servants be personally accountable for their actions and achievement of results. Performance standards are established by professional norms and prevailing *better* practices of ones' peer or work group, and hence, public official action and decisions are based more on internalised values and appropriate practice than mere political responsiveness (Romzek, 2000: 26). The assumption here is that, public servants have special skills, experience and work methods and they exercise discretion responsibly in a manner that is consistent with acceptable norms.

The new approach to public management suits *output* and *outcome* orientations of performance standards. Therefore it stresses political and professional accountability. The traditional approaches of bureaucratic and legal accountability cannot merely be discarded. This is because, systems of devolved authority, responsibility and extensive discretion only works well when supported by other kinds of control, like administrative law, judicial or administrative review and strong legislative oversight (Aucoin *et al.*, 2000: 48).

## DYNAMICS OF ACCOUNTABILITY IN PUBLIC MANAGEMENT REFORM

The wave of public sector reforms in developing countries, especially under the aegis of the IMF/ World Bank, have manifested under a replication of names such as; *re-inventing or re-engineering government, new managerialism<sup>2</sup>, and total quality management*; all with the avowed intent of increasing efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness and accountability in public sector organisations (Haque, 2000; Romzek, 2000; Aucoin *et al.*, 2000). The adopted strategies of these reforms have also undertaken different dimensions including decentralisation, deregulation, privatisation, downsizing government, de-bureaucratising, with a view to fostering performance through accountability and transparency (Keen and Scasse, 1998; Haque, 2000; Romzek, 2000;



Aucoin *et al.*, 2000). As a result, while performance evaluation in the public sector has traditionally emphasised rules and procedure traditions, the new trends have sought to increase reliance on administrative discretion, management flexibility and entrepreneurial orientations. Such changes have also earmarked a shift in accountability patterns and relationships from the hierarchical and rules based accountability towards political and professional options; with the corresponding performance evaluation standards changing from *input* systems and *processes* towards *output* and *outcome* standards.

The **input** measure focuses on capacity that an agency or manager has in order to carry out a programme or activity – in terms of human, financial and other material capacities in place. Performance measure is based on the capacity of the agency's resource in e.g. budget, number and skill mix of employees, supervisory ratios and succession plans.

A **process** measure emphasises proper procedural requirements and compliance with mandates in the form of regulations, consultation, and adequacy of process. The argument is that to follow the means (process) as required, the action is satisfactory. For example, social service agencies like police, judiciary, human rights commissions, normally utilise a process measure.

**Outputs** are concerned with the quantity and quality of products made and services delivered. For example, how many schools, health centres, roads, boreholes were constructed by an agency or a municipality, and what were their relative qualities?

**Outcomes** are concerned with the results of the output. That is to say, how the quantity and quality of services produced have satisfied the clients, customers or programme needs. For example, how the output has affected the level of poverty, targeted diseases, environmental pollution, employment and illiteracy rates.

## CHALLENGES OF ACCOUNTABILITY IN PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

**A**s noted earlier, the changes associated with public management reform – emphasising the application of business principles and practices to the public sector – toward autonomy, competition, efficiency, outcome, partnership and customer orientation, have had critical implications for public accountability in the form of political, managerial, and methodological challenges. This shift, away of emphasis from the traditional ethical norms has affected accountability patterns in such a way that, instead of being answerable for social welfare, citizens' rights, impartiality, fairness and justice, public government is gradually more accountable for economic-growth rate, encouraging competition and maximising profit (Haque, 2000: 601). In many ways, authority and responsibility structures have been altered, thereby posing serious consequences to the efficacy of accountability mechanisms.

### Collaborative management: public-private partnership

The changing role of the public sector from directly providing goods and services towards facilitating economic performance through the private sector has had its toll on accountability. Greater shared government and collaborative management of public



business through public-private partnerships (PPP) arrangement have been introduced. While it can and has indeed demonstrated quality improvements through competition and performance in managing and reporting on, outputs and outcomes, especially between the public and private executives, it has not necessarily translated into responsiveness and accountability to the citizens. Haque (2000: 602) stresses that;

*Accountability for public governance for market-based economic performance does not necessarily imply accountability for citizens' rights, its accountability for competition and productivity does not guarantee its accountability for representation and equality, and its accountability for higher profit does not connote its accountability for welfare and justice.*

A number of cases involving contracting out of service delivery under the decentralised local government arrangement, elsewhere in Africa reveal that the growing emphasis on utilising business-like criteria in achieving accountability under the PPP has, at times, ignored the conventional principle of being accountable to the public, and the public interest as local elites conspire with affluent business people to rip-off the public (see Smoke, 2003; Francis and James, 2003; Olowu, 2003). While referring to decentralisation in Africa, Smoke (2003: 12) argues that reforms have overwhelmed the capacity of weak local governments or created "opportunities for poor use of resources by freeing local officials from central control without adequately developing their accountability to local constituents". Another major manifestation of precluding the common citizens from the equation of public accountability has come as a result of affluent business class purchasing privatised assets that have been sold at nominal prices. There are in turn used to win deals of contracted-out services (Haque, 2000: 604). In this case, contractors only account to the officials, in same way as the PPP and joint ventures require accountability of public management to the business elite.

## **To whom to account**

The notion of *to whom to account*, evokes another complexity on who to satisfy amongst the various sources of authority. Under the highly partisan and politically polarised structures of public organisations in most developing countries, public employees face an array of divergent forces of authority with competing performance expectations. Given the ordinary, multiple sources of authority, which comprise supervisors, elected political executives and legislators, the courts, external auditing agencies, professional associations, co-workers, clients and the general public. Romzek (2000: 22) avers that, it can constitute a major problem to public officials, as sometimes "it is unclear which of the focal points or sources of expectations constitutes the most legitimate source of authority for a given situation".

There has also been rising controversy over the change in composition of the agents of accountability (accountable to whom?). Conventionally and, in principle, public service is public trust, and must therefore serve the public interest without fear or favour. The redefinition of citizens to customers or clients in the new public management paradigm

makes *public governance accountable for effective delivery of services to customers who can pay*, while it may remain indifferent to low income citizens who cannot afford (Haque, 2000: 603). Woodhouse (1997) views this as “accountability in the consumerist mode of governance, which is to private customers rather than to the collective public” (Haque, 2000: 604).

## The dilemma of cost-sharing

Similarly, the user charges introduced in many developing countries continue to preclude the poor citizens – who are the majority, and thereby weaken their rather strong conventional position as principals to whom accountability is due. User charges imply that, while public agencies may be accountable to affluent customers, they are not obliged to do so to the poor citizens. As part of the structural adjustments and donor conditionalities under which most of these reforms are encapsulated, many poor countries have had to cut their expenditures from key social services and instead, introduce *cost-sharing* on e.g. health care, education and water. Amazingly, the burden of cost-sharing is further aggravated by the numerous kinds of taxes introduced, while hiking the rates of the existing ones by several governments and municipalities, but conversely, with reduced services to the poor. As a result, the anti-welfare episodes of public sector restructuring have reduced the access of poor citizens to education and health (UNDP, 2005; ADB, 2005). In essence, these trends have tended to diminish the citizens’ rights *vis-à-vis* the state and thus a challenge to public accountability.

## Conflicting accountability relationships

While it was noted that the different accountability types may work in cohesion, sometimes they unleash conflicting episodes and challenge accountability. For example, rules often require one not to be responsive to requests for special treatment from constituencies yet this can create a problem to a civil servant, who in spite of being right (in respect of legal accountability), may be accused of being non-responsive (not being politically accountable). Sometimes exercising one’s professional judgement – professional accountability, can be in conflict with rules (Romzek, 2000: 30). Hence the different accountability forms must be streamlined to offer consistent accountability relationships.

As noted earlier under the accountability dynamics, the shifting accountability patterns and priorities create instability and a challenge to public servants to pursue professional zeal. Romzek (2000: 30) makes an interesting metaphor about elected politicians – legislators who can wear an auditor’s hat one day and a customer’s hat the next day. Put better, a legislator can be part of an investigation into an agency’s fund expenditure (legal accountability) and a week later the same agency may have to make a decision about program implementation and whether to be responsive to the same legislator’s wishes. The challenge therefore, lies in how far a public servant can make a professional balance, while being responsive to different stakeholders.

## Resentment to change

The other challenge, especially with the new reform strategies has to do with the attitude problem of the long-standing traditions of performing functions in the public sector. While flexibility and discretion appears to be a proper solution to many administrative problems, there has been considerable opposition from those that seek to have more control over the bureaucracy (Guy Peters, 1995: 292). Yet the new managerial strategies like flexibility, employee discretion, and customer orientation must be re-aligned with suitable accountability relationships, for example, cutting red-tape, increasing flexibility and employee discretion requires some cutback on the constraints from hierarchical and legal accountability relationships. Given that these reforms have not received equal blessings from several public sector echelons, especially those that still worship seniority, protocol and officialdom, there is still a considerable amount of resistance from many public sector officials. The challenge remains on how to contain the ensuing resentment, and be able to redirect focus from input and processes toward output and outcomes.

## Political polarisation

Public accountability is affected by the expanding scope of administrative politicisation, caused by the growing power of political executives like ministers, who exert influence on the public service. This is what Hague (2000: 606) calls the era of *macho-ministers* in terms of expanded ministerial power to make decisions related to appointment, dismissal and retrenchment of Public servants. This erodes the principle of political neutrality and makes public servants vulnerable to the whims of politicians ignoring their accountability to the general public. Given that some of these decisions are, unfortunately, based on personal and political considerations, the political neutrality that is expected of public servants withers away. While referring to many case examples of patronage, especially in the developing countries, Kakumba and Kuye (2006: 813) conclude that, "efficient management styles may be compromised for political expediency, and that it is no exaggeration to say that several managerial, technical and proficiently demanding appointments are made in the interest of expanding the political base for the wielders of state power". The challenge thus remains that, public servants resort to dancing to the tunes of political executives and become less accountable to the general public interest.

Guy Peters (1995) does not seem to agree with the above when he considers the other side of political appointments. He points out that attempts to create job security and insulate public servants from political pressures has in a way made the nature of many civil service systems place emphasis on job security rather than project completion or public responsiveness, which create significant problems in obtaining accountability and exercising control. Guy, Peters (1995: 293) argues that in the United States of America, where political leaders appoint senior public servants who are appointed and dismissed by a go regime; and in Sweden, German, France and Belgium, where political leaders have

considerable discretion in selecting senior public servants, the executive departments are made more politically accountable (Guy Peters, 1995: 294).

Be that as it may, such appointments and influence from political executives – while they may be intended to insure responsiveness to elected officials – the situational environment under which the public sector operates in developing countries militates against their potential attributes.

## Ethical dilemma

The ethical shortcomings in the developing world's public sector do not offer fertile ground for responsible exercise of discretion and professional judgement. The ethical deficiencies have much to do with *weak or non-existing systems, weak values, as well as weak consequences* (Pauw, *et al.*, 2002: 337-339). Weak systems tend to have organisational structures that do not offer clear description of responsibilities and do not spell out clear lines of authority, communication and accountability. Similarly, the employment systems tend to be associated with not only poor working conditions, but also appointments based on irregular considerations like nepotism and political-clientelism, as opposed to professional competence. This renders public institutions rather weak and incapable of adhering to the principle of accountability and other ethical virtues. Consequences are associated with poor sanction and action against misconduct. In this case, the existing control and preventive mechanisms to unethical behaviour may not pose a threat to the perpetrators. Weak consequences thrive mostly under undemocratic traditions – typical of developing countries – where by government policy and regulatory arrangements may rather, instead condone unethical practices. It is also common to find existing oversight institutions marginalised and kept incapable of pursuing their mandates by patron-client networks supported by the wielders of state power.

## Misconceived accountability

Challenge relate to the wrong attitude and perception viewing accountability as negative. Yet, accountability is answerability for performance – and it can as well, mean positive performance. This misconception arises out of several review processes that tend to over-magnify the ills in public government, only to fall short of recognising exceptional performance. Gildenhuis (1997: 59) pleads that, official activities should not only receive negative criticism, but rather, even the effective, efficient and responsive resource management should be made public in a positive way. Aucoin *et al.*, (2000: 53) blames this on *too great a focus* on accountability as a *control or assurance* which undermines the third purpose of accountability – of *continuous improvement*. This scenario arises out of the overzealousness with the oversight agencies to search for any evidence of mal-administration to justify their own importance; or the practice of the mass media to sensationalise and exaggerate some public service deficiencies in order to promote their purposes. Such attitude and misrepresentation must be rectified if new management approaches are to capture any grounds in the developing world.

## CONCLUSION

The above articulation indicates that, the need to transform the public sector and pursue accountability with the aim of achieving continuous improvement, require those who inspect, audit and review public service management to acknowledge the challenges, and also appreciate the constraints under which public servants operate, or where they have little or no control. Whereas the performance measures are important in spearheading output and outcome orientations that manifest under political and professional accountability relations, the traditional public service values such as impartiality, representation, integrity, fairness, welfare and justice, should not be abandoned since they represent the basic measure of public interest.

It is important to note that reforming the public sector require changes within the thought process of individual and organisational culture. It calls for training of administrators to better understand clients and their problems, as well as increasing their willingness to take personal responsibility for actions, and to take rules for the benefit of their clients, rather than as an instrument of their own protection. Similarly, tackling the public sector's ethical and accountability failures require a multi-faceted approach. This ranges from establishing and strengthening control institutions, to reorienting systems and processes. Systems include employment and organisational as well as financial management systems. It also calls for a pro-active legislative and regulatory framework that should not only be said to be existing in the law books, but should also be seen to be operational. The other control mechanism is the civil society, whose capacity should be fostered to become vibrant with civic competence, so as to challenge actions and inactions of defiant public officials.

## NOTES

- 1 Used interchangeably to refer to public sector accountability
- 2 Relates to an ideology, seeking to shift from the traditional public administration schema, which is associated with Weberian principles of strict hierarchical control and centralised decision making, towards greater flexibility, autonomy with a focus on results orientation (output and outcomes).

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