
UNIT 19 ACCOUNTABILITY

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19.0 LEARNING OUTCOME

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- Describe the concept of accountability
- Explain the nature and significance of accountability in public administration
- Identify the different types of accountability
- Specify the various tools of accountability
- Discuss accountability in the context of contemporary concerns about “good governance”; and
- Place accountability in the context of global governance

19.1 INTRODUCTION

In a democracy, government should not only be constituted by the people; it should also be accountable to the people. In other words, government servants or the bureaucracy should function in public interest, and they must be held accountable for whatever they do or do not do. In reality, government is run by professional civil servants with the help of laws, rules and regulations. Because of the size of government and the distance between the people and the serving government servants, it is not always easy to know why some policies are adopted and how they are implemented. Also, government

operations are often kept secret and hedged in by complex rules and regulations. Accountability is the lifeblood of democracy. Openness of governmental operations and a system of holding the civil servants accountable for their actions make democracy real and functional. The major concerns surrounding accountability are: how to apply checks on bureaucratic 'power', how to exercise supervision over the exercise of 'power' and how to work out institutional constraints on the bureaucratic power holders. Thus, accountability implies both 'answerability' (or giving an 'account' of actions taken) and 'enforceability' (or punitive measures for illegal, inadequate, and improper performance).

In this Unit, we shall discuss the meaning and nature of accountability and its different forms and tools. Also, we shall explain the relevance of accountability in the context of contemporary concerns about 'good governance'. Briefly, the importance of accountability in the contemporary context of global governance is presented at the end.

19.2 ACCOUNTABILITY: CONCEPT, NATURE AND SIGNIFICANCE

Accountability, in simple terms is answerability for one's action or behaviour. Public services accountability involves the methodology through which a public agency or a public official fulfils assigned duties and obligations. It includes the process by which the agency or the official is required to account for such actions. Governments everywhere – in both developed and underdeveloped nations-are powerful institutions run by the bureaucrats. Expanding government functions have brought in their trail bureaucratic expansion, and the bureaucracies have a constant impact on the quality of life of the citizens. There is, thus, an increasing concern today about how the bureaucracies are using 'power'. At the heart of these concerns is 'accountability': for what and to whom are bureaucracies answerable? How are the bureaucracies held accountable?

Bureaucratic accountability is at the core of public administration in a democracy. Under a constitutional system of government, it is axiomatic that the bureaucrats should be subordinate to the mandates and constraints of the Constitution as interpreted by the judiciary, and to their hierarchical superiors within the organisation. Democratic government also postulates the subordination of the bureaucrats to the people and their elected representatives.

As Fesler and Kettl (1991), point out, bureaucratic responsibility has to be seen from two standpoints. One is accountability in terms of answerability for whatever the bureaucracy does or does not do; the other is ethical behaviour. In their words: "The two elements overlap and are generally compatible, but not always. Morality may call for disobedience to superiors or reporting of superiors' unethical behaviour to their superiors, to legislators, or to the public".

In discussing accountability, our major concern should be about how to ensure that those who wield power, exercise it responsibly, so that they can be held accountable for their actions. According to classical democratic theory, the line of accountability is fairly straightforward. The people elect their representatives on the basis of their stand on social, political, economic issues. Administrative agencies carry out the policies made by

the people's representatives. They are indeed accountable to their political chiefs who in turn, are answerable to the legislature. In modern day administration, this policy-making and policy-implementation dichotomy does not hold good. The administrators do participate in policy-making and their discretion in today's big government is enormous. As the State has grown big and there have been abuses of power by the bureaucrats, incessant demands have been made by the public and the media that there must be clearer and more transparent public administration, and that the moral behaviour of public officials must be improved. In other words, the public demand in most democracies has been that there must be responsible use of power and authority and clearer means of administrative accountability.

The notion of accountability carries two basic connotations: answerability, which stands for the obligation of public officials to inform about and explain what they are doing; and enforcement, i.e., the capacity of accounting agencies to impose sanctions on power holders who have violated their public duties. According to Romzek and Dubnick (1987), the answerability concept is too narrow to capture the full reality of accountability relationships. In their view, public administration accountability involves the means by which public agencies and their workers manage the diverse expectations generated within and outside the organisation.

Accountability can be viewed from the perspective of domesticating power. There are three different ways of preventing and redressing the abuse of political power. They are:

1. Subjecting power to the threat of sanctions,
2. Obliging it to be exercised in transparent ways; and
3. Forcing it to justify its acts.

Accountability involves the right to receive information, which is the informational dimension of accountability. There is then the corresponding obligation to release all necessary details. It also implies the right to receive an explanation and the corresponding duty to justify one's conduct. This is the argumentative dimension of accountability. As Andreas Shedlar (1999) *et al.*, aptly put it, "Power should be bound not only by legal constraints but also by the logic of public reasoning. Accountability is antithetical to monolog power. It establishes a dialogic relationship between accountable and accounting actors. It makes both parties speak and engages them both in public debate. It is therefore opposed not only to mute power but also to unilateral speechless controls of power."

19.3 PURPOSES OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Three different purposes of accountability assume importance in this context. The first objective, is controlling abuse of bureaucratic power and discretion. The second purpose, is there must be an assurance that performance will be in accordance with standards and quality. The third aim, is there has to be a system promoting learning in pursuit of continuous improvement in governance and public management. On top of it, there is the human dimension of accountability, subsuming values and ethics and creating trust in

government. As Adam Wolf (2000), aptly puts it, "if there is no transparency and no living democracy with a free press, the control of abuse and the advanced performance evaluation will lead nowhere. Accountability in public administration cannot be reduced to a technical question of designing control procedures and institutions. It is a question of democracy". So, the basic purpose of accountability is to make a close fit between administration and democracy.

Accountability places at least four requirements on the public administration. These include to:

1. Make laws work as intended with a minimum of waste and delay
2. Exercise lawful and sensible administration discretion
3. Recommend new policies and propose changes in existing policies and programmes as needed; and
4. Enhance citizen confidence in the administrative institutions of government.

19.4 ACCOUNTABLE TO WHOM?

In western democracies such as the United States and Westminster models of governance, public employees face multiple sources of legitimate authority, and expectations in performance. As Romzek and Dubnick (*op cit*) point out, "Authority relationships and legitimate performance expectations can derive from supervisors, elected chief executives and legislators, the courts, external auditing agencies, professional associations, coworkers, clients, and the general public". These multiple sources of authority, obviously, create complex relationships and present challenges to serving public officials. Operationally — for practical purposes of administration — 'accountability' structures relationships in terms of 'who is accountable to whom'. The accountability could be to the internal hierarchy, legislature, judiciary, citizens and the media. Broadly, the two facets of accountability can be presented from two interdependent perspectives: intra- organisational perspective and extra or supra-organisational perspective. Conventionally, the hierarchical structure of bureaucracy creates superior-subordinate relationship. Under this structural principle, the subordinate is accountable for his/her actions to the superior. The superior officer at the top of the hierarchy (like a secretary to a department) is in turn accountable to the political boss - the minister. The minister has, on occasions, had to give answers to the legislature, when questions are asked about the performance of his / her department. There is thus a chain of accountability that is institutionalised in a democratic system. We can call this 'intra-organisational' accountability. From this perspective, legislative accountability is not considered separately; it is an integral part of a chain that binds the department with the legislative system.

Legislative accountability is axiomatic in a democratic system. The executive is constitutionally accountable to the legislature. So, this form of accountability may also be viewed as extra or supra-organisational accountability.

Extra or supra-organisational accountability is external to the department. The administrators in a department/organisation can be sued in a court of law for lapses and unlawful actions. Judicial accountability is thus contingent on some client or citizen appealing to the judiciary for justice in a case where the client or citizen has evidence to prove that a public organisation has acted unlawfully or unjustly.

The other important external accountability stems from direct action by citizens or at the citizen-organisation interface. In a democracy, the citizen has the right to raise questions about alleged 'injustice', 'inaction' or 'improper' action of the administrative officials. 'Right to information' is now being statutorily recognised to enable the citizens to seek information from the public organisations on matters in which a citizen has direct interest. The new device of 'citizens' charter' about which we have discussed in Courses 011 and 012, is now gaining in popularity as a kind of memorandum of understanding between the public organisation and the citizen. For instance, how much of water and in what frequency a municipality will supply to its residents, or how and in what frequency the garbage will be lifted from the households and the local areas - these and similar other commitments of a municipality are negotiated between the municipality and the local citizens which then is recorded in the 'citizens' charter'. In this way the municipality remains accountable to the citizens for the delivery of specific services. Accountability to the citizen has in recent times been widely acknowledged as vitally important to promote participative democracy, and imaginative devices are being worked out to build a healthy relationship between the citizens and the public organisations - particularly those that are at the cutting edge level.

In this context, a special mention needs to be made of the role of the media (television, newspapers etc.) in holding the public organisations accountable in public interest. Investigative journalism has developed as a category by itself to probe deep into cases of scams and scandals involving corruption and dereliction of duty by public organisations and their functionaries. 'Letters to editor's' column is a common feature in all newspapers through which public complaints and grievances against public organisations are ventilated. Public accountability of government and semi-government organisations is ensured in a democracy through the working of strong and independent media. The role of 'people's movements' in holding the public organisations accountable deserves special mention in our (third world) context. People's movements against big dams and 'developments' causing large scale displacements, consumers' movements for quality services at reasonable price, and similar other movements keep the government organisations on their toes, and these movements influence public policy and often force participative decision making in many situations.

19.5 TYPES OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Admittedly, accountability is a very complex concept, which need not be mixed up with the commonplace idea of tackling corruption. It is really a 'driving force' that generates pressures on the key administrators to be responsible for and to ensure good public service performance. Accountability has both a substantive part and a procedural or means part. On the substantive side, the focus may be on mundane things such as

'regularity' in following the prescribed rules and regulations of the organisation and observing the formally prescribed authority pattern. Then, there is the notion of 'performance accountability' that focuses on effectiveness and achievement of goals. Also, there is the related concept of financial accountability involving evaluation of achievement of goals and checking the actual fulfilment of a preplanned service. Based on these considerations, three major kinds of accountability have been suggested: fiscal accountability, process accountability and program accountability. Fiscal accountability is the most traditional form of accountability involving scrutiny of records of financial transactions to ensure that the expenditure has been legally made. In this way, the legislature wields its power over the purse. By reviewing financial records, the investigators often uncover and prosecute kickbacks in contracts and abuse of welfare programs.

The performance of tasks by public agencies is at the core of process accountability. Procedural irregularities (such as improper tenders and contracts) in roads and buildings construction, and in other government activities are detected. Suitable measures to curb these are also suggested in this form of accountability.

Programme accountability focuses on results or effectiveness. Government funds and procedures are merely means to ends. It is not enough to show that funds have been fully spent on, say, anti-poverty programs. The real issue is whether the beneficiary is correctly identified? Have the programmes been able to really improve the living standard/economic status of the beneficiary? Programme accountability looks beyond mere efficiency. It indeed searches for effective implementation.

Jabbar and Dwivedi (1988), have defined public service accountability as "methods by which a public agency or a public official fulfils its duties and obligations, and the process by which that agency or the public official is required to account for such actions". Seen in the context of public policy and administration, accountability in their view, should include at least five elements such as

- Organisational or administrative
- Legal
- Professional
- Political
- Moral

Organisational accountability is the traditional hierarchical accountability within the organisation, as laid down in the classical Weberian bureaucratic form of administration.

Legal accountability relates actions in the public domain to the established legislative and judicial process. This is achieved either by a court action or by a judicial review of the administrative action. The public organisation or its officials are held accountable for not following legislative norms or legal delegations.

Professional accountability involves balancing the code of profession (of doctors, engineers and the like) with a greater purpose of protecting the public interest. Today, governments rely more and more on the expert advice of the professionals, who, in course of discharge of their duties, define public interest in their own way. It is not

unlikely for the two — public interest and professional code — to collide in reality. However, it is public interest, which in the ultimate analysis, should determine the responsibility and accountability of the professional.

Political accountability is concerned with the legitimacy of any public program and even the survival of the involved organisation. In other words, in a democracy, the administrators are "duty bound to recognise the power of political authority to regulate, set priorities, redistribute resources and to ensure compliance with orders". Last, but not the least is the moral accountability.

Moral accountability is at the core of public administration. It is more than obedience to laws and bureaucratic norms. A moral public official is the one who "strives for a moral government". As instances of administrative and political corruption become more and more widespread, the demand for moral accountability in the management of public affairs gets articulated more and more in different forums such as the media, the legislature, and the judiciary.

19.6 TOOLS OF ACCOUNTABILITY

There are different tools or means available to make public servants accountable. Specific tools are designed to suit particular purposes. Since the concept is essentially multi-dimensional, several tools are employed simultaneously in different countries to ensure administrative accountability in practice. As the following Table shows, the different tools subserve different purposes (Hayllar, 1991).

Table: Tools of Accountability

Ends (to facilitate / enhance)	Means (Tools)
Legitimacy	Constitutions and electoral systems for establishing government and decision-making bodies; bureaucratic systems of representation; Royal prerogative; legislations; letters of appointment; standing orders and formal delegations of authority
Moral Conduct	Upholding social values, concepts of social justice and public interest; professional values; training/induction programs
Responsiveness	Public participation and consultation; debates; advisory bodies; public meetings; freedom of speech
Openness	Parliamentary questions time; public information services, freedom of information laws: public hearings: green and white papers; annual reports
Optimal resource utilisation	Budgets; financial procedures; rules of vehement; parliamentary public accounts committees; auditing; public enquiries and participation; formal planning systems
Efficiency and effectiveness	Information communication systems; setting objectives and standards; programme guidelines; approval; feedback from public

19.7 ACCOUNTABILITY: THE CHANGING PERSPECTIVES

Historically, the liberal-democratic set-up evolved several basic mechanisms of accountability such as ministerial control, parliamentary debates, legislative committees, media scrutiny and the ombudsman system. In the recent times, there have been some major changes — a sort of paradigmatic transition — in the mode of public governance under the rubric of 'new public management', 'reinventing' or 'reengineering' government. In essence, what is being advocated is a market-centered, neo-liberal approach to governance with a greater focus on economic growth and productivity. Its normative standards are now redirected towards efficiency, competition, profit, and value for money. The standards that are being set for public governance are those of business management. This marks a radical departure from the traditional norms and objectives of governance: enhancing human progress, maintaining law and order, removing poverty and unemployment, providing public welfare, ensuring impartiality and equal treatment, safeguarding citizens' rights, and guaranteeing justice and fairness.

As it has been aptly put by Haque (1998) and Konig (1997), in contemporary public management, 'the new diction is the language of the market, of competition, of enterprises, customers and, in a nutshell, of entrepreneurial management'. There has thus emerged a unique set of challenges to the realisation of accountability in the current phase of public administrative changes everywhere. Haque explains in detail, the current dilemma of accountability in today's public governance ambience. As he argues, the contemporary changes in governance – toward efficiency, outcome, competition, value for money, catalytic role, autonomy, partnership and customer orientation, pose formidable political, managerial, and methodological challenges to accountability in terms of three specific dimensions:

1. the standards of accountability (accountability for what)
2. the agents of accountability (accountability to whom); and
3. the means of accountability (how accountability is ensured).

So far as the first dimension, i.e. the standards of accountability are concerned, these have under the current mode of governance, become instrumental in nature, placing more emphasis on procedural and economic criteria such as efficiency and productivity, than on substantive public concerns like equality and representation. To quote Haque, "It is essential to understand that the accountability of public governance for market-based economic performance does not necessarily imply its accountability for citizens' rights, its accountability for competitive 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. In short, therefore, the growing primacy of business-like criteria adopted in contemporary public governance, has the tendency to displace its accountability in terms of established democratic standards."

Governmental role, in the new public management credo, has been changing from "rowing" (direct production and distribution) to "steering" (indirect monitoring and evaluation). It is being conceived in terms of a facilitating role: providing support

services to the private sector, maintaining a conducive atmosphere for market competition, and implementing and monitoring divestment, and contracting out. Under the changed circumstances, public accountability, as it is conventionally known, gets obscured when the public sector plays a direct role in providing goods and services whereas based on concrete socio-economic programmes and projects, its activities become more tangible and measurable, and thus easier to scrutinise, in its indirect role — to encourage and facilitate the private sector to deliver goods and services — it becomes relatively intangible, immeasurable and thus unverifiable.

As regards the second dimension, which includes the agents of accountability, through their evolutionary process, governments in democratic societies have increasingly become accountable to diverse groups and classes of citizens entitled to social services such as education, housing, health and social security. The people-centered tradition of accountability has "evolved with the emergence of broader civil society, an organised working class and an increase in the entitlements or rights of common citizens". Under the new paradigm of public management (NPM), citizens have been redefined as customers or clients. This is a commercial view of citizenship, which reduces the social rights associated with collective citizenship, to narrow commercial prerogatives of individual customers governed by exchange relationship.

Accountability, under this consumerist mode of governance, is to private, affluent customers rather than to the collective public. In the consequence, the economically underprivileged citizens, who often depend on the State for basic services, do not qualify as customers for not being able to afford user charges. As the critics point out, the customer view tends to diminish citizens' rights vis-a-vis the State, and excludes common citizens from the purview of public accountability. As such it has been alleged that public governance today has become more accountable and responsive, not to the general public, but to the affluent business community.

The third dimension — the means of accountability — has been under challenge in today's context of neo-liberal mode of governance, which has brought in its trail, new sets of institutions, structures and norms. Following Haque's analysis, the first change to note is the growing power of ministers or political executives to exert influence on the public service, leading to the politicisation of civil servants by ministers in violation of the principle of political neutrality. The recent policy to do away with permanent tenure of senior public servants and introduce contract-based appointments makes the public servants more vulnerable to political executives exercising control over the job contracts and careers. Ministerial control, as a means of accountability, makes the public servants extremely loyal to ministers, overlooking in effect their accountability to the general public.

Secondly, the existing means of accountability may be affected by the structural and procedural autonomy granted under the current governance system. Most developed countries such as UK, Canada, New Zealand, France and others have disaggregated and corporatised various ministries and departments into autonomous entities. Autonomisation of public agencies for the avowed purposes of economy and productivity has reduced the opportunities of political representatives to scrutinise their activities and diminished the scope of legislative debates over programs undertaken by the agencies

almost like private corporations, with maximum operational autonomy. Unprecedented managerial autonomy poses a serious challenge to the traditional means of accountability and even opens up opportunities for abuse and corruption by the chief executives of the autonomous agencies, who may use the public offices for private gains and overlook laws and rules that generally govern public administration.

Thirdly, under the 'new public management' regime, many developed and developing countries have shifted from process-oriented to result-oriented performance of public agencies, with increasing focus on outcome than inputs. On the face of it, the result-oriented administration may look quite attractive; but such a mode of governance is likely to render the existing means of accountability, ineffective. As Haque has observed, it is difficult to put such outcome-based administrative system under legislative scrutiny due to the qualitative and controversial nature of public sector outcomes such as environmental security, poverty alleviation and community development. The result-oriented public administration tends to focus more on "what" is being achieved. In consequence, there is likely to be the "diminishing relevance of such means of public accountability as internal control and supervision over various inputs and processes in the public sector".

Last, but not the least, under the current mode of governance, public-private partnerships and exchanges pose a threat to certain means of accountability, since these modalities are less answerable to normal legislative scrutiny and ministerial supervision. It is often difficult to find out if joint ventures or business deals have been made to the detriment of public interest or not. Stories are often heard of contracts of different kinds involving extra-legal tactics and opportunities for substantial 'kickbacks'. To sum up, as Haque rightly points out, "the current proliferation of public-private partnership and exchange represents a challenge to various legislative and executive means of accountability".

19.8 ACCOUNTABILITY UNDER "GOOD GOVERNANCE"

The World Bank's lending conditionality under the rubric of "good governance" has been reviewed by many authors from the standpoint of conceptual elaboration of 'governance' and its implications for third world development (Bhattacharya, 1998). Good governance is itself an accountability-oriented concept applicable to specific target group — the third world countries. To follow the line of thinking of its sponsor (the World Bank), good governance is synonymous with sound development management; it is an essential complement to sound economic policies. Governments are the main producers of public goods and they frame rules for the market to work efficiently. The institutional frameworks conducive to growth and poverty alleviation do not evolve on their own; rather, the emergence of such frameworks need incentives and adequate institutional capacity to create and sustain them. It is in this context that the World Bank (1992) pinpoints accountability as an essential prerequisite of 'good governance'.

The World Bank's accountability concern, in the context of structural adjustment policy, has pervaded both public and private sectors. The phenomenon of 'capture' of public services and resources by relatively narrow special interests has been a common feature

in most countries. Governments often keep their transactions secret and the public in general, is not prone to demanding information about performance. Accountability assumes importance in respect of ensuring efficiency in investment as well as in production and distribution of public goods and services. Government has also to ensure accountability in the private sector through appropriate company and securities legislation, competitive policy and regulatory oversight, especially when "down- sizing" of government takes place through disinvestment, privatisation and contracting. The present trend of formulating corporate governance codes and making public and private sector companies adhere to them is a way to exercise accountability.

Public accountability, as the Bank document points out, involves three interrelated groups:

1. The general public and particularly, recipients of public services, who are interested in service providers being accountable to them.
2. Political leaders and supervisors of service providers who would like the service providers to be accountable to them.
3. The service providers themselves, whose objectives and interests often differ from those pointed out in 1 and 2.

To follow the Bank's argument, historically accountability has revealed three features:

1. Salience of micro-level accountability as due to expansion of State activity, it has become difficult to apply broad political accountability to numerous functions of government.
2. Focus in accountability tends to be on inputs, especially public expenditure, rather than outputs or effects.
3. Accountability has mostly been by internal administrative controls, exercised by political leaders, government agencies and bureaucrats acting as proxies for the public.

Two broad types of accountability identified by the Bank are: micro-accountability, and macro-accountability. Micro-accountability remains critical, especially in ensuring government responsiveness to the views and needs of the public for which services are intended. The concepts of "exit" and "voice" which originated in Hirschman's (1970) classic work, have been used to underscore the importance of micro- accountability. For instance, scope for the public to "exit" when dissatisfied with a service, may have a salutary effect on the agency concerned, by reducing its revenues which in turn gives insecurity to the jobs of the staff. Similarly, "voice" in the sense of participation of the public, may influence the quality or volume of a service through some form of articulation of preferences or demand. Accountability is increased if such "voice" makes the public agency more responsive to public demands.

It has been the Bank's policy to find out ways of increasing "exit" and "voice" at the design stage of service delivery projects. Accountability at the micro level, however, is sustained only when the government and society at large are committed to doing so.

Decentralisation in the form of strengthening local government has been widely viewed as essential to ensuring greater responsiveness and accountability for many kinds of infrastructure and services that have hitherto been in the control of the central government.

The other kind of accountability —macro-accountability — has two major dimensions: financial accountability and accountability for overall economic performance. Financial accountability involves, as the Bank document identifies,

1. a properly functioning government accounting system for effective expenditure control and cash management;
2. an external audit system, which reinforces expenditure control against misspending and corruption; and
3. mechanisms to review and act on the results of audits and to ensure that follow up actions are taken to remedy problems identified.

As it has been rightly emphasised, without a well-functioning system of financial accountability, government efficiency is difficult to measure , and there is likelihood of corruption increasing greatly.

Accountability for economic performance involves review of resource use in public investment programs and general strengthening of the capacity of governments to monitor and evaluate their own economic performance, including proper resource use. This form of accountability can be enforced only with the help of special kinds of data regarding both inputs (resources) and outputs (expected results and consequences).

19.9 ACCOUNTABILITY IN GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

In recent years, there has been an increasing demand for accountability at the international level sparked by a number of recent trends. Global governance has taken the shape of a vast network as governments call upon international organisations such as the UN, the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO to take on broader, deeper roles in ensuring stability, growth, and security within as well as among states. Then there are the large corporations that are organising not just their commercial activities but also their lobbying and self-regulation at a global level to protect their transnational activities and opportunities. The other category – the nongovernmental organisations – are expanding fast in different fields. We are thus witnessing in this century more global actors, processes and issues. The implications for development, in this situation, are rather perplexing. Within the boundaries of the State, people have at least enjoyed a potential to hold their governments to account through elections, impartial courts, ombudsmen, the media and other instrumentalities.

Increasingly, governments are compelled to delegate or cede control over many important domestic matters to international organisations, networks or other actors. In this kind of a set-up, even in democracies, governments cannot be held to account for a wide range of decisions. As the UNDP document on ‘Accountability in Global Governance’(2002) has rightly put it:

“In the industrialised world the accountability gap is being partially plugged by an ever-expanding number of NGOs and active investigative media attention, not only on domestic issues but increasingly targeted at international actors. Government agencies, international organisations, and large corporations such as BP, Shell and De Beers have all found themselves the targets of uncomfortable scrutiny. In the public sector, consumers, parents, and patients are being offered more information and choice about products, schools and hospitals. Indeed, there is even an emerging debate about the downside of ‘too much accountability’ by people in industrialised countries wearied by what seems an excess of monitoring, reporting and measuring outputs in public services. Little of this is true for developing countries.....In international organisations, developing country governments have little power and influence to wield in holding these agencies to account. Furthermore, their own actions in these organisations are less monitored by their own national media and NGOs. In the global private sector, in new public-private expert networks and in ‘global civil society’, developing countries have even less capacity to hold global actors to account. For these reasons, accountability in global governance and its implications for development need rethinking”.

19.10 CONCLUSION

After studying this Unit, you will be able to explain the concept of accountability. You will also realise the nature and significance of accountability in a democracy. Again, from the democratic point of view the purposes of accountability should be clear to you. The next clarification is in regard to accountability relationship or, to whom are the public agencies/officials accountable. There are different types of accountability as well as the tools that are used to make accountability effective. Accountability has not been a static notion. The concept of accountability has been evolving over the long span of public administration. It is undergoing change under ‘New Public Management’ and Good Governance’ which are emerging paradigms of public administration. At the end, the other major contemporary concern – accountability in global governance – is discussed in broad outline.

19.11 KEY CONCEPTS

Corporate Governance

It is the system by which business corporations are directed and controlled. The corporate governance structure specifies the rights and responsibilities of different participants in the enterprise such as the board, managers, shareholders and other stakeholders and spells out the rules and procedures for making decisions an corporate affairs.

Global Governance

Global governance has been defined by David Held, a British social scientist as comprising not only the institutions of State and inter-governmental cooperation, but all those organisations from multinational corporations, trans national social movements to

non governmental organisations which pursue goals and objectives that bear a trans national rule. It is system wide structure that allows as well as constraints actions of several actors who are in interdependent relationships without any overarching political authority.

Ombudsman

An ombudsman is a government official entrusted with the task of representing the interests of the public by investigating and addressing complaints reported by individual citizens. The term was first used in Sweden with the Parliamentary ombudsman instituted in 1809 to safeguard the rights of citizens by establishing a supervisory agency independent of the executive branch.

Paradigm

It refers to a thought pattern in any scientific discipline in an epistemological context. The applicability of paradigms to social sciences has been popularised by Thomas Kuhn's work on "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions". Kuhn (1970), considers paradigm as one which has a) a community of scholars and practitioners, sharing certain values, b) epistemology and a methodology. A scientific paradigm is defined as one which indicates a) what is to be observed and scrutinised, b) the kind of questions which are supposed to be asked and probed, and c) interpretation of scientific investigations.

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19.13 ACTIVITIES

1. Talk to a few persons working in public as well as private organisations and enquire about the mechanisms of accountability in their organisations. Make a report on this exercise.
2. Interview the local elected representative and enquire about his / her perceptions regarding the various tools of ensuring their accountability. Record your findings.