Public Organization and Management
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Lecture – 18
Accountability and Control – III

Hello dear learners, let us continue the discussion on the accountability and control mechanisms. In the previous session, we have talked about the conceptual understanding of accountability and I have talked about various types of accountabilities including vertical accountability, hybrid accountability, social accountability. So, in this session, we are going to start now our basic foundation of accountability is clear. So, we are now going to understand one of the important framework which is you know, coined by, proposed by Romzek and Dubnick in the paper entitled Accountability in Public Sector, published in Public Administration Review. So, I am taking the, you know, the framework from Romzek and Dubnick to explain the aspect of accountability in public sector organization. Of course, first of all, we will understand about the framework and, you know, the accountability system, types of accountability systems that they have proposed.

Then we will try to look into the Indian case studies to look into, to understand this particular framework in a more detailed and refined way. Now, let us look into the framework as proposed by Romzek and Dubnick in 1987. Now, according to authors, Romzek and Dubnick, they equated accountability term as with answerability. is more about, in the previous session also in the beginning we talked about in simple terms accountability is more about answerability. Romzek and Dubnick also in their paper, they largely equated the aspect of accountability with the idea of answerability. Now, according to authors, answerability, accountability, it means the "administrators and agencies, they are accountable to the extent they are required to be answerable for their actions". So, please note the definition here. which is given in the paper, that answerability is in simple terms, it means that the agencies and the public officials, they are answerable for their actions because they are accountable. Another way of looking at it, these accountability mechanisms are the means by which public agencies and their officials manage the diverse expectations generated within and outside the organization.

So, if you can again recall, We discussed about the types of accountability systems in terms of intra-organizational and extra-organizational. So, this particular framework also talked about the means to manage the diverse expectation generated within and outside the organization. Now, Romzek and Dubnick proposed types of accountability systems to manage diverse expectation within and outside the organization. So, we will look into this that what kind of various forms the accountability mechanisms can actually take.

Now, before understanding this, there are certain important definitions that you need to understand first before I go ahead with the framework.

Now, the accountability systems that the authors have proposed, they are basically dependent upon two critical success factors or I would rather say two important dimensions. So, the first dimensions as they have mentioned that these types of accountability system that they have proposed, they can vary along two dimensions. So, first dimension is the source of agency's control. Agency, I am talking about the organization or a public organization. So, where is the control of this agency? Who is controlling the activity of this agency? Now, as per the definition, what have they mentioned? They say that source of agency control, "whether the ability to define and control the expectations of the public organization, who is actually holding this particular control"? Is it somebody who is within the organization or outside the organization? Where lies the control of agency? Where is the source? So, two different type of source of agency control are - internal or external.

So, when it is internal, this is all about the informal social relationships and the formal hierarchy within the agency. So, control is internal means control is exercised by the formal hierarchy, by following the formal hierarchy. or the informal relationships between the people within the organization. So, source of agency control is internal and that control is exercised through former hierarchical and informal social relationships within the agency. When it is external, when the source of agency control is outside the agency, now what happen is how this control is exercised? "Authority by formalized arrangement set forth in law or informal exercise of power located outside the agency".

So, when the agency's source is outside, for example, what kind of source it can be? It can be law which is enacted and it is putting pressure on the organizations to comply or the, you know, organizations are mandated to follow those laws, right. So, agency's control is outside. So, law is actually telling the organization to, you know, follow the mandates being given to the organizations, you know, they can be held accountable from the external agency, you know, in terms of Or there can also be political authority which is outside the organizations, they are also putting lot of controls on the agency's actions. Let's say we talk about this thing, public organizations, they are largely funded by the government. So political authority, they have that exercise of control on the public sector organization, the way they are functioning.

For example, if I just talked about internal activities of the organization in terms of procurement, how the resources are to be procured. So, in that way, the organization's control outside lies in the way that there are certain guidelines, certain procedures that they have to be followed from the government side. So, source of agency control goes outside because there comes out with a lot of, you know, compliance to the outside

agency, right, outside, you know, power. The other dimension is degree of control over agency's actions. One is control is internal or external.

So when it is you know how much you know actions are controlled in the terms of degree that is basically degree of control. So, the degree of control that the entity is given over defining agencies, those agencies' expectations. So, in terms of example, we talked about that these four types of accountability mechanisms that Romzek and Dubnick, they have proposed, they are basically, depending upon the variations in the two dimensions, source of agency control and degree of control over agency's actions. So, if it is internal, let us say source of agency's control is internal when we say that formal hierarchical system ensures that accountability ensures. In terms of degree, It can be high degree, like when it is high degree, we can say that whosoever is controlling, is it internal or external, the controllers have lot of ability to decide both the range and depth of agency's actions.

What agency is supposed to be doing in terms of meeting the expectations of the stakeholders, the source of control, whether it is internal or external, they will have high degree of control over agency's actions, right? If it is low degree, it is basically when we say that the control may be outside or inside, but agency will be given enough discretion in terms of deciding what operations they are to do. So, I think difference is clear now. In this case, we are saying that there is only a source of agency control. The source of agency control can be internal or external. Degree of control in the source, how much degree they have, degree of control they have in terms of controlling the actions of the agency.

If it is high degree, the controller, maybe internal or external, how much degree they will have to control the activity of the agency in terms of their actions. If it is a lower degree, the considerable discretion on the part of agency's operation, meaning that the agency has been given enough liberty in terms of deciding on the actions that they would want to do, operation that they want to do in order to meet the expectations of the stakeholders. Now, depending upon these particular two dimensions, let me first of all draw a matrix here to tell you what kind of accountability systems Romzek and Dubnick has proposed. See, on one side, we can take, let us say, On one side, we can take source of agency control, meaning I have told you already that the source is where? The source is going to be internal or it is external. Like source lies within the organization or outside the organization.

On the other side, we can say that degree of control on agency's actions. Now, it can be high degree or it can be low degree. First of all, let us understand these two important definitions are clear to you. Source of agency's control where it lies outside or within. Then on the other side, we have degree of control on agency's actions. You know, it is high control or a low control. Now, depending upon this particular, you know, the combination, different combinations of high, low to internal and external, there

are different kind of bureaucratic, you know, the accountability, sorry, different kind of accountability systems are being proposed. Now, first of all let us look into when the source of agency's control is external and also degree of control on agency's actions is high. This particular accountability system is termed as legal accountability by authors. We will talk about in detail what is the meaning of legal accountability and of course, we will talk about the various cases also.

So, if the external control is there in terms of source of agency control and the degree of control on agency's action is high, it is a case of legal accountability. If the source of agency's control is internal, there is a formal hierarchy which ensures the accountability or social formal relationships, informal relationships inside the organization takes care of accountability. But at the same time, degree of accountability is high. This particular aspect is termed as bureaucratic accountability by authors. Then comes when the source of agency control is external but degree of control on agency's action is low.

This is termed as political accountability. And final, when the source of control, agency's control is internal and the degree of actions on the, you know, the actions of the agencies are low, this is called as a professional accountability. These are the four forms which we have talked about that when the external control is there and then high degree of control is there, legal accountability. When external control is there, internal, you know, sorry, the high degree of control and agency action is there, a bureaucratic accountability. When this source of agency control is external and the low degree of control on agency's actions, political accountability, control is internal and degree of control on agency's action is also low, it is basically a case of professional accountability, right.

Now, we will look into the Indian case studies, you know, with respect to these four accountability systems which are proposed by Romzek and Dubnick. First of all, we will look into, you know, the aspects of accountability. Now, bureaucratic accountability. Now, if you remember, we talked about bureaucratic accountability. Bureaucratic accountability, how it is ensured? Bureaucratic accountability is internal control, right? But there is a high degree of control on agency's actions.

Now, who is controlling these actions? We are talking about the formal hierarchy, right? We talked about the aspect of formal hierarchy. So, internal control, when there is, you know, where expectations are managed through a hierarchical relationship between supervisor and subordinate. We talked about this because the source of control is internal. So, this particular expectation is basically managed through the formal hierarchical system. and it is to be driven by strict supervision and of course, the subordinates adherence to orders and operating procedures.

Let us look at an example from the Indian case study on how bureaucratic accountability is ensured. Let's say look at the example of National Health Mission launched by Indian

government which operates under a hierarchical structure where bureaucrats at different levels, Ministry of Health, state level officers or district health officers, they are responsible for implementing healthcare initiatives in the public hospitals. Now, if you look at this implementation, the implementation of the policies and programs developed by higher authorities is ensured at the street level through bureaucratic accountability. You will see that there are of course, policy programs are there. So, inside control is there, so bureaucratic accountability has to follow the hierarchical you know, the order in terms of, you know, implementation of the policies within the, you know, the organization.

So, this particular example is basically talking about the bureaucratic accountability. Let us look into more details of this. Now, from maintaining the, if in terms of, you know, the public policy programs and, you know, ensuring it through proper implementation through bureaucratic accountability,   From maintaining hospital infrastructures to healthcare protocols, all the public hospitals, they must adhere to the strict guidelines published by Ministry of Health. So, we are talking about one particular, you know, agency's function that how it has to be taken care of. So, tough bureaucratic control, formal hierarchical relationships is to ensure that health protocols are being, healthcare protocols are being followed by following to the strict guidelines published by Ministry of Health, right.

Also, bureaucratic accountability is also ensured through by demonstrated by the fact that violation of these procedures or guidelines may result in the strict action from the higher authority. We talked about this thing adherence to the rules and regulations when we talk about the bureaucratic accountability in this case. So, this is the example of bureaucratic accountability with the help of an Indian example, how bureaucratic accountability ensures the expectations are managed in the organizational context. I hope this is clear, bureaucratic accountability we have talked about. Then comes second, which is professional accountability.

Just look at the metrics which I have drawn here. What is professional accountability? Source of agency control is internal, but degree of control or agency's actions are low. Naturally, because they are professional, you know, organizations where the expertise lies with the organization. So, they are the one who can decide what kind of operations, what kind of things are, you know, are supposed to be taken care of to meet the expectations to manage the diverse expectations, right. Now, this particular accountability says that as I have mentioned that the source of agency control is internal and the degree of control on agency's actions is low.

So, this particularly, you know, this particular accountability is characterized by reliance on experts, right. Because we're talking about professional organization. Reliance on experts and professionals to make decisions and perform tasks with autonomy while

aligning their actions with the profession and code of conduct. So, we are not saying that if they are professional organizations, so degree of accountability is just low like that. The idea here is that because they are a professional organization where a lot of expertise and technical professionals are there, so they are allowed to make decisions and perform tasks.

A lot of freedom is being given to them. Autonomy is given to them. But it's also to be ensured that they are well aligned with the code and conduct of their profession. So, they need to abide by what their profession demands them to be in terms of following the proper conduct. Now, in this case, professionals of this organization are answerable to both organization as well as professional regulatory body. Let us try to look at this particular, understand the aspect of professional accountability with the help of an Indian case study.

The National Medical Commission, NMC, what they do is, they regulate the conduct of, you know, competence of healthcare professionals in India. So, we talked about the doctors, right. So, what happens is, doctors in the public hospitals, of course, not only public hospitals, in the private sector organization also, they need to adhere to the professional standards of care, right. Their conduct protocols they have to follow, which are being clearly given. So, they have to follow the guidelines or the ethical code of conduct or the code of conduct of their profession, right, competence of the healthcare profession in India by NMC.

So, what happened is, in India, the public hospital doctors are expected to follow the code of conduct set by medical regulatory bodies. Because we are talking about public sector organizations, that is why I have highlighted public hospital here, but it is not only public hospital. Doctors in private sector organization also, they are to abide by the codes and the conducts of the commission. Now, let's say you have seen the cases where doctors, they fail to adhere to the guidelines or fail to meet the medical standards through their conduct, what they are doing. If they fail to meet the medical standard, we have seen that the National Medical Commission, they have all the right to suspend their license and of course, thereby ensuring accountability through professional oversight.

So, we will say that though we are giving enough extent of degree of the actions, they can decide on their own because the degree on the agency's actions is low, but they need to do their activities in such a way that they are not deviating from the code of conduct which are given to the professions, it is going to be then invite consequences to their actions. Another example, we can also look at engineers or let us say we talked about architects. So, there are also professional bodies which will have the detailed code of conduct and guidelines the way the organization has to function because specialized organizational field will have much more liberty in terms of how they want to decide their actions on. But they have to follow the strict rules and guidelines, follow the code of

conduct of the profession. Otherwise, there could be professional oversight which will always ask them questions if they deviate from the code of conduct or they move away from the guidelines.

That's how professional accountability is to be ensured in the organizations. Then comes the next accountability mechanism, which is termed as legal accountability. If you go to the metrics here I have drawn, in case of external accountability, what happened is the source of agency control is external. you know, in terms of law and the contract will see that and by the degree on agency's actions also is high. So, in this case what happened is the legal accountability framework if you look at, this accountability type is driven by external control through laws and contracts.

So, there are various laws which are there. And the organizations are to be avoid by these laws. So, these agencies, they are answerable to the external entities such as courts or legislatures for their adherence to policies and laws. So, you cannot avoid. See, there is a legal accountability, source is external. So, courts can always put pressure on the organization and holding them accountable for their actions, right. So, the expectations, diverse expectation meeting by the organization, this being handled by adhering to the laws and do not deviate from the laws what they are saying, right. Now, because agencies can be asked questions about that if they are not following what is prescribed in the law. We will talk about some of the examples. I have talked about only one of the examples in this particular case study, but there are other examples also you can take. For example, RTI Act 2005 is one of the examples to demonstrate the aspect of legal accountability in the public sector organization.

Let's look into this, what can be, you know, what are the guidelines, what can be done and how public organizations are to be held accountable. Now, under this act, what happened is the citizens are empowered, you know, to request for information from public authority, right? Public authority, when I say, I am talking about the government departments, ministries and public sector organizations. So, what happens is, when the public demands some kind of information, these organizations are to be legally obligated to reply within a specific time period. But the law also says about, Act also talked about what kind of information can be shared.

It's not about any information can be given. The law also talked about what kind of information should be given. There are certain kind of guidelines were written. So, accordingly, if the public is asking for the information, so the organizations are to provide that information and reply within this specified period of time. Now, this particular law enforces legal accountability on public officials and institutions, ensuring why it is there so that there is a lot of transparency in the system, right? And these officials and organizations are answerable to public regarding their actions, decisions and use of public

funds, as I have given you example before also. The public can ask about the design of public policies or how certain procedures are being taken care of.

There could be some issues with respect to how public organizations are using funds. So, these kind of information if is being sought from the organization, public organization and if it is applicable under the Act, then of course, this information has to be given. If it is not given, then there of course, there are repercussions, there are consequences that the organization will have to face in order to comply with the Act. So, citizens can file an RTI requesting to understand, for example, why the delay happened in providing services.

This can also be one of the case. or whether proper guidelines have been followed or protocols were followed by providing services. So, there should be clear-cut transparency in the system in terms of public service delivery or providing services to the citizens, what kind of protocols and procedures have been followed. So, this kind of information can be asked. But again, I am just concluding it in the sense that public officials can always face legal consequences if they fail to provide information or obstruct any kind of access to the information which is to be provided to the public. But at the same time, I am also saying that this is basically to be taken care of as per the Act what it says.

It cannot be just whatever information is to be, you know, asked to be provided. According to the Act, there are certain kind of information which can be made available. Others might not be. So, depending upon the guidelines given in the Act, this can be taken care of, right. Let us talk about the final accountability scenario here and I am going to talk about very interesting case study here of Indian Space Research Organization.

So, political accountability is about external control. We will say that, political accountability if you look at, it has source of agency control is external. Okay, but degree of control on agencies actions is low. So this is more of a case of a political accountability, right? Now what happened is a political accountability in this case refers to the responsiveness to the political constituencies elected officials the general public and the other stakeholders. Now what happened is though the degree of control on agencies actions in this case is very very low. But what happened is the organization is still have to be responsive to the political authority, you know, for their actions, what they are doing in terms of the, you know, the activities and how they, what kind of goals they are pursuing, how these kind of goals are well aligned, you know, with the interest of the nation, right.

So, this particular thing doesn't say that if there is no political accountability degree in terms of degree, it is low, they are not responsive to that, right. Now, political pressures, you know, they also shape decision making to align with public expectations or

governmental mandates. I am not saying that politics cannot have any kind of intervention, but say that, of course, there is a political accountability that the organization has to ensure, but at the same time, there is a pressure from the outside political authority in terms of, you know, meeting the demands and you know meeting the public expectations and following the governmental mandate so please remember in this case the accountability is lying outside the organization but degree of control on agencies actions would be very very low now let's look at the the case of you know here in case of I am talking about the case study of ISRO So, political executive, they always supported the Indian space program in terms of budget or leadership support. And we see that they have always supported the Indian space program because of the contribution of the organization. So, say that the budget allocation and the support to the Department of Space has increased since its inception.

So, recently, if you can see that in the 2024-25 budget, the allocation has seen a hike of 18%, approximately. these many, you know, crores as compared to 2023 to 2024. This is also an indication of, you know, political responsiveness, of this organizational responsiveness towards the political authority, you know, in terms of number of, you know, successful programs, number of successful, you know, launches this organization have made. For example, if you look at the source number 2 here to find out what kind of programs they have done, number of successful program by ISRO is evident with its number of successful space missions which are being conducted.

It included 125 spacecraft mission. various launch missions, satellites, which is launched by ISRO and so many other things. Now, in this case, how is political accountability is ensured in the public organization? I will continue the discussion in the next session because it is going to be little more detailed in terms of understanding the culture of this particular organization in terms of being more responsive to the political authority. So, I will continue with this particular case study in the next session.