

Block 4

**Public Systems Management:
Emerging Perspectives**

UNIT 12 ACCOUNTABILITY*

Structure

- 12.0 Objectives
- 12.1 Introduction
- 12.2 Accountability: Concept, Nature and Significance
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12.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you should be able to:

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

12.1 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

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makes 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 either 'answerability' (or giving an 'account' of actions taken) or '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'.

12.2 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 countries -are powerful institutions run by the bureaucrats. Expanding government functions has brought in 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 the bureaucracies are held accountable?

Bureaucratic accountability is at the core of public administration in a democracy. Under a constitutional system of government, it is expected 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 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 straightforward. The people elect their representatives based on 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 policymaking and policy-implementation dichotomy does not hold good. The administrators do participate in policymaking and their discretion in today's big government is enormous. As the State has grown big and there has been abuse 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.

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.

12.3 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.

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 administrative 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.

12.4 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. 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 evident 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 device of 'citizens' charter' that gained popularity is 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, environment issues 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.

12.5 TYPES OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Admittedly, accountability is a complex concept, which need not be mixed up with the 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 programme 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 programmes.

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 programmes. 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 the inductees, define public interest in the own way. It is not unlikely for the two — public interest and professional code — to collide. 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 programme 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, and 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.

12.6 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 question 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
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Check Your Progress 1

Note: (1) Use the space given below for your answers.

(2) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

1. Explain the concept of accountability.

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2. What are the various types of accountability?

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3. Discuss different means of ensuring accountability.

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12.7 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- 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.

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 and 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. 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. Ministerial control, as a means of accountability, makes the public servants extremely loyal to ministers, overlooking in effect their accountability to the 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 programmes 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 opportunities for abuse and corruption by the chief executives of the autonomous agencies, which 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.

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. Cases 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".

12.8 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 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 on 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.

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 programmes 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).

In recent years, there has been an increasing demand for accountability at the international level sparked by several 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, and 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 non governmental organisations—is 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. There is need for evolving different mechanisms of ensuring their accountability.

Check Your Progress 2

Note: (1) Use the space given below for your answers.

(2) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

1. Examine the changing dimensions of accountability.

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2. Bring out the features of accountability under good governance.

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12.9 CONCLUSION

After studying this Unit, you shall 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 regarding 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.

12.10 GLOSSARY

- 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 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, transnational social movements and non-governmental organisations which pursue goals and objectives that bear a transnational 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.

: 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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12.12 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. Your answer should include the following points:
 - Accountability is answerability for one's action or behaviour.
 - It includes the process by which the agency or the official is required to account for fulfilment of assigned duties and responsibilities.
 - Bureaucratic accountability is the bureaucrats being subordinate to Constitutional mandates as interpreted by the judiciary and to the hierarchical superiors in the organisation.
2. Your answer should include the following points:
 - Organisational accountability
 - Legal accountability
 - Professional accountability
 - Political accountability
 - Moral accountability
3. Your answer should include the following points:
 - Public participation and consultation

- Freedom of information laws
- Budgets, financial procedures, audit
- Parliamentary questions

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1. Your answer should include the following points:

- The contemporary changes in governance in terms of efficiency, competition, outcomes, value for money etc., have brought in changes in accountability in three dimensions namely standards, agents and means.
- The first dimension namely standards of accountability places more emphasis on procedural and economic criteria such as efficiency and productivity.
- The second dimension namely the agents of accountability places emphasis on civil society, organised working class and increase in rights of common citizens.
- The third dimension- the means of accountability in the context of present day neo-liberal regime brings in new sets of institutions, structures, and norms.

2. Your answer should include the following points:

- The two types of accountability- micro and macro.
- Micro accountability in ensuring government responsiveness to the public needs.
- Macro accountability has two dimensions- financial accountability and accountability for overall economic performance.
- Accountability of service providers to the public, political leaders and supervisors of service providers.

UNIT 13 RESPONSIVENESS*

Structure

- 13.0 Objectives
- 13.1 Introduction
- 13.2 Concept of Responsiveness
- 13.3 Responsive Mechanisms
- 13.4 Changing Perspectives of Responsiveness in Public Systems Management
- 13.5 New Public Service and New Public Governance
- 13.6 Timeliness and Responsiveness
- 13.7 Conclusion
- 13.8 Glossary
- 13.9 References
- 13.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

13.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the concept and mechanisms of responsiveness;
- Discuss the changing perspectives of responsiveness in public systems management;
- Describe the concepts of New Public Service and New Public Governance; and
- Comprehend the relationship between timeliness and responsiveness.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

The concept of responsiveness is assuming new dimensions in the discipline and practice of public administration. The delivery of public goods and services to beneficiaries without heeding to what they really want does not result in satisfaction of the citizens. The indicators of good governance are - Voice and Accountability; Political Stability and Absence of Violence; Government Effectiveness; Regulatory Quality; Rule of Law; and Control of Corruption. The government effectiveness is one of the most important factors to achieve good governance which depends upon the other indicator of voice and accountability. Responsive public systems imply that the government listens to what people need. This at times could go against the rule of law because if the government starts listening to the voice of every individual, to some extent it may not be in consonance with the rules and laws. However, there can be ways of establishing responsive public systems. The Sustainable Development Goal 16 deals with 'peace, justice and strong institutions' which relates to having a transparent, accountable and a participant society. Responsiveness is a holistic perspective. This unit shall discuss the ways in which responsiveness in public systems can be ensured. The traditional and

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the New Public Management approaches that support them, shall be discussed. The unit shall also analyse “New Public Service Approach”; “New Public Governance” relating to responsiveness in public management systems.

13.2 CONCEPT OF RESPONSIVENESS

Responsive public governance is based on the ways the public systems respond efficiently and effectively to people’s real needs. The term “responsiveness” refers to the practice of ensuring that clients (citizens in this case) are served and in a responsive and responsible manner by government agencies and officials. The service provider must listen to the needs of the client and help when he/she enters a government facility for some help. It calls for an approach comprising strategies; policies; programmes; activities and resources; that keep in view the needs, aspirations, and expectations of the people.

Responsiveness describes the extent to which a public service agency demonstrates receptivity to the views, complaints, and suggestions of the service users, by bringing about and implementing changes to its own structure, culture, and service delivery patterns in order to deliver a more appropriate product (Jalal, 2005).

The United Nations Global Survey for a Better World (2013) included “an honest and responsive government” as an indicator for a better world. To ensure efficiency and effectiveness in meeting developmental challenges, the governments across the globe have been collaborating with the private sector and civil society organisations as partners. The UN acknowledged that the multi-stakeholder partnership model allows sharing burden, catalysing action, and bringing all relevant actors to bear in addressing specific problems.

Responsive governments bring about responsiveness by not only ensuring people’s participation in the electoral process but also with increased public participation in decision-making. For example, the citizens’ committees are added in the policy formulation discussions so that the needs of the citizens are understood at the ground level. Citizens must be addressed as co-creators of public value instead of mere service recipients.

13.3 RESPONSIVENESS MECHANISMS

Many studies have proved that citizen participation which is integral to achieve responsive management in public systems increases efficiency. In most democratic nations, there is a choice and freedom to elect or remove a legislator through an established mechanism. However, at times few decisions of the government which are in public interest like ban on certain activities or any practice or so on cannot align with the demands of some social group. Choices and freedom need to be legitimised and illegal or undemocratic demands must not be met with. The public must believe that the process to arrive at decisions was fair, reasonable, and overall beneficial. Citizens’ control over the operations of public agencies is a core necessity in every democracy. There has to be sufficient knowledge on the ways to strike a balance between what citizens desire and what governments offer. Given below are the ways the administration/ government can become responsive through its public management systems:

- **Institutionalising Responsiveness Systems:** Modern administration must respond to the demand for participation in public affairs by establishing

appropriate legal frameworks; designated organisational functions and reliable channels and modalities. The new ways of responsiveness, based on multi-stakeholder policy (private companies and civil service organisations), need competency for the promotion and regulations to manage all the stakeholders.

- **New Collaborative and Participatory Mechanisms of Responsiveness:** Public administration has to meet the challenges of responsiveness in a globalised world with the new collaborative and participatory mechanisms and features. Since there is so much diversity of cultures; opinions and laws, the public servants must be trained to be responsive to the needs of the citizens. In India, the civil servants are given sensitivity training so that they understand individual citizen needs also.
- **Digital Footprint:** With the help of internet and social media, information and data can be disseminated quickly so that the opinions of citizens can be included in policy formulation. In India, opinions are asked through emails or the portals of various government departments or agencies about policies before finalising them. The e-governance initiatives in India are to ensure responsiveness. We have already discussed these in detail in Unit 8 of this Course.
- **Diversity:** The governments and administration have to deal with all forms of diversities relating to caste, gender, ethnicity, or culture while making policies to achieve responsive governance in the management of public systems. It becomes a challenge for the governance actors because there cannot be one solution. That is why the solutions must match the needs by strengthening the local institutions which can relate and communicate with the citizens.
- **Rights-based Approach:** The administration must work for responsive governance based on the rights-based approach because it is a growing demand amongst the citizens. This approach comprises the following elements:
 - International Human rights
 - Gender responsiveness
 - Equality goals
 - Access to justice; and
 - Effective justice administration.
- **Public Engagement:** The citizens must be able to participate in governance directly or through freely chosen representatives according to Article 21 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. As per UN Public administration Country Studies, more than 150 countries in the world enshrine the right of citizens to participate in one form or another. Citizens have more opinions and suggestions about local matters and can participate in the decision-making that concerns them. In India, panchayati raj institutions initiate public engagement in development works at grassroots level. There are several examples such as Kudumbashree experiment in Kerala that involves community organisation of self-help groups of women. They work on several issues including health, nutrition, agriculture, and income generating activities. Participatory budgeting exercise is also a significant initiative. In Kerala, the people's plan campaign introduced in 1996 is to involve all stakeholders at

grassroots level in proposing development projects and plans. The joint forest committees functioning in many states in India promote several afforestation activities with the participation of local people and forest department.

- **Code of Ethics:** Corruption among public servants makes the whole system of governance inefficient and ineffective. Public service bridges the gap between the citizens and the State. Established regulatory framework like the code of Ethics can be laid out for the public servants to become responsive in conducting public affairs and delivering goods and services to the people.
- **Technology and Innovation:** The government departments and agencies are using information and communication technology to disseminate information to the citizens on services being rendered. Many websites of the Ministries and departments in India are user friendly in facilitating the citizens get information or access services. Also, Common Service Centres (CSCs) are the access points for various electronic delivery services to the citizens.
- **Citizens' Charter:** 'Citizen's Charter' initiative is a response to the quest for solving the problems which a citizen encounters, day in and day out, while dealing with the organisations providing public services. This implies that the government has a duty and a responsibility to be answerable to the public in their day-to-day concerns and proceedings with the administration. It is fundamentally a promise of delivering to the client or the citizen and if the administration is unable to do so within a stipulated time, then the citizen has to be compensated. Such a concept has emerged in a very definitive form all over the world so that there is satisfaction among the citizens, thereby leading to responsive good governance.
- **Public Services Accessibility:** The State is making the common public services accessible to citizens by establishing centres or one stop points where citizens can pay electricity, water bills, property taxes, and so on.
- **Comprehensible Rules and Laws:** The rules, laws and various forms that need to be filled out by citizens to gain access to benefits of public goods and services must be in an easy and comprehensible language.

If the people in a society do not perceive governance to be responsive to their needs, there is a decline in trust in the government which may have adverse consequences like political and social instability. It usually happens when the public starts feeling that the government/administration is unable to deliver quality public goods and services. On the other hand, if the citizens perceive that the government is acting in their interest, they cooperate with the administration. Hence, the perception of citizens about the administration is of great importance if the latter wants to achieve responsive governance. Inclusive and public participation strategies are essential to build trust in maintaining legitimacy and stability of political systems.

13.4 CHANGING PERSPECTIVES OF RESPONSIVENESS IN PUBLIC SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT

The traditional public administration was greatly influenced by Max Weber's idea of bureaucracy based on meritocracy and hierarchy. It had countered patronage and

favouritism in government decisions and appointments. Efficiency and effectiveness were the main areas of focus for the bureaucracy. Its features were centralised control; set rules, guidelines, and laws; separation of policy formulation and implementation; and a hierarchical organisational structure.

Traditional Weberian Public Administration Model

This Weberian model continued till the 1980s which had the following features:

- Separation of elected and appointed public officials.
- Continuous, predictable, and rule-based administration.
- Merit-based recruitment and appointment of administrators.
- Functional division of labour and a hierarchy of tasks and people.
- Resources belong to the organisation and not the persons working in it; and
- Serving of public interest instead of personal interest by the public servants.

This approach continued in many newly independent nations till they observed a decline in governance and effectiveness of public administration because the model was not followed as prescribed. Favouritism and corruption were the major causes of poor governance.

The responsiveness towards citizens in the traditional perspective was in a way characterised by distance between the citizens and administration. The State assumed the role of provider of services and the citizens were passive recipients. There was also certain amount of rigidity, formalism, strict adherence to rules with little flexibility and discretion with the administration and in a way was a top-down governance approach.

New Public Management Model

New Public Management (NPM) was initiated in the 1970s by Margaret Thatcher with an aim to develop mechanisms to establish accountability of the public sector. NPM focuses on the reform of public services to make them more responsive and accountable since the traditional public administration worked with the inefficient large public bureaucracies. The old public administration is based on the top-down approach in which the public officials are instilled with hierarchy, independence, integrity, and neutrality. If the public goods and services provided to the citizens are not efficiently or effectively delivered or are not of standard quality, then they are of no use to them. The main elements of NPM approach are:

- Restructuring of local governments;
- Outsourcing, value for money, and comprehensive performance assessment;
- Cost efficiency;
- Adoption of practices and techniques from private sector management;
- Distinction between policy making and policy implementation ;
- Focus on entrepreneurial leadership within public service organisations; and
- Breaking up of public services to basic units.

The public services were contracted out to the private sector companies and non-profit companies. However, the public sector reforms based on the NPM approach were done unevenly and partially with minimal consultations with the citizens. There was a mix of successes and failures out of which the failures were in weakening of democratic accountability of private enterprises. The market economy favoured responsiveness to the citizens who were demanding services as clients or customers.

The post-NPM reforms departed from market-based reforms with focus on citizen's participation, community well being, networking, and collaborative partnerships. The aim is to strengthen public service ethos.

There has been a change gradually in the emergence of collaborative, participative and partnership relationship between citizens and administration. The New Public Service and New Public Governance concepts as we shall be discussing in subsequent sections gave primacy to the citizen and make public systems develop suitable responsive mechanisms.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: (1) Use the space given below for your answers.

(2) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

1) What do you understand by responsive governance?

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2) Discuss the ways to ensure responsiveness in the public systems.

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3) Examine the changing perspective of responsiveness in public systems management.

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13.5 NEW PUBLIC SERVICE AND NEW PUBLIC GOVERNANCE

Responsiveness assumed importance with the propagation of the concepts of New Public Service (NPS) and New Public Governance (NPG). New Public Service is

different from old public administration, new public management, and new public administration although it includes some of the features from them. It puts forth a set of norms and practices that emphasise democracy and citizenship as the basis for public administration theory and practice. NPS propagated by Denhardt and Denhardt (2003) comprises seven principles given below:

1. **Serve citizens, not customers:** Citizens occupy an important place in governance, and they need to be served. Public interest is the result of sharing values among citizens rather than aggregating individual's self-interests. Responsive public service has to respond to citizens' demands unlike customers' needs as emphasised by NPM.
2. **Seek the public interest:** Public administration must look for solutions to build a collective and shared notion of public interest not by individual choices but rather by creating shared interests and responsibility. The second principle of NPS is a reaffirmation of the centrality of the public interest in government service.
3. **Value citizenship over entrepreneurship:** Entrepreneurs think that public money is their own whereas public interest is promoted by the commitment of the citizens and public servants. In the present world, the public policies are not a result of the government's decision-making but rather the consequence of multiple interests of multiple groups. The main role of the government among other functions, is to move the society in a direction with the help of non-profit organisations and the private sector. The main goal is to serve the community to relieve it from the problems that they face.
4. **Think strategically, act democratically:** Denhardt stated the fourth principle of NPS as the convergence of policies and programmes with the needs of the people can improve effectiveness through collective and collaborate processes. The implementation of public policies must be carried out jointly by the administration and the citizens to achieve the desired direction. An open, responsive, and accessible environment must be created by the government for the citizens to build trust in it. It can be done best by creating platforms for collaboration by the government and facilitated by administrators.

Hence, it is concluded here that in the NPS, the primary focus of implementation is citizen engagement and community building. Citizen involvement is involved with setting priorities, policymaking, and policy implementation. The citizens begin to perceive themselves as citizens and not as consumers or beneficiaries of the states. The government organisations are a public space in which the citizens and administrators work together for the common public good. Denhardt mentions the concept of coproduction which is derived from community rather than the market. There are three elements of community that they established, which are:

- i. social interaction;
- ii. shared territory; and
- iii. common bonds.

When these three elements combine, policy implementation becomes easier by offering incentives or disincentives to change the choices of self-interested persons. This model focuses on the performance and productivity indicators to evaluate if the governments are doing well or not. Coproduction must comprise the factors of

mutual trust, cooperation, and shared responsibility just like community policing is done with the collaboration of the government and the community to solve neighbourhood problems. Privatisation of goods and services is based on competition model and cannot build mutual trust with the citizens.

5. **Recognise that accountability is not simple:** Public servants must be more attentive to statutory and constitutional law; community values; political norms; professional standards; and citizens interests. The NPS acknowledges the central components of accountability in democratic governance and the reality of administrative responsibilities. Recognition of these components will result in work towards it. Performance indicators of efficiency that are used in the market are inapplicable in the encouragement of responsible behaviour. The “whom” and “what” of accountability falls into the dilemma of whether it must be evaluated by external controls or the administrators must utilise their technical and professional knowledge to be responsible while following the orders of the elected officials within law.

NPS states that accountability is complex because it involves multiple and complicated roles played by the public servants. It is a challenge that requires rethinking the role of the public servants as a leader and a diplomatic messenger of the public interest. Citizen participation is most important in accepting the challenge of accountability. So, the public servants are accountable to everyone while adhering to the law, morality, judgement, and responsibility.

6. **Serve rather than steer:** The principle “Serve rather than steer” refers to the shared, value-based leadership in helping the citizens have a voice and meet the challenges of the shared interests but not steer or control the society in a new direction. The fifth principle deals with the inculcation of the leadership perspective in the public servants. In a highly turbulent and interdependent world, creating innovative solutions is the need of the hour instead of a top-down mode of leadership. The changes occurring in leadership are:

- Desire of participation by the citizens in the decisions that affect them.
- Leadership is a part of the process that occurs throughout organisations.
- Shared leadership; and
- Not doing the right things but doing them right.

NPS considers leadership a natural part of the human experience, subject to both rational and intuitive forces, and concerned with focusing human energy on activities that benefit humanity. It is a function that extends throughout groups, organisations, and societies.

7. **Value people, not just productivity:** People get frustrated with the public and elected officials and they have no trust in them. They feel not as people but as puppets or victims at the hands of the officials. So, NPS proposes that public organisations and participating networks will be more sustainable and successful if their shared and participative collaboration with the people is based on the respect for all the people. The values and interests of people are most important in governance which must comprise mutual trust, authority, performance, and responsibility.

NPS considers the elements of human behaviour, like human dignity, trust, belongingness, concern for others, service, and citizenship, based on shared ideals and public interests. Fairness, equity, responsiveness, respect, empowerment, and commitment do not hamper efficiency.

New Public Governance (NPG)

The NPG approach was proposed by Stephen P. Osborne (2006) and later by many other scholars in public administration that places citizens rather than the government as the focus of administration. It is a mode of governance that emphasises interaction, cooperation, and collaboration between the State and non-state actors to achieve policy objectives. Networks and partnerships are its forms that attempt to improve horizontal and vertical coordination between organisations and stakeholders and simplify the governance process. The main elements of NPG are:

1. **Plural and Pluralistic:** The State is both plural and pluralistic. The public service that it undertakes is plural in nature as it is carried out by the State and other agencies to which the task is contracted which could be private sector companies or non-profit organisations. It is pluralistic as it comprises various processes and inputs that ultimately make up a policy. The State is not the only stakeholder in the process of policymaking because there are multiple partners and interests that are its factors.
2. **Inter-relationships:** There is an inter-organisational relationship and the governance of processes. They use three components for governance which are :
 - Trust;
 - Relational capital; and
 - Relational contracts.

The term 'relational' means an intangible asset that is utilised by building relationships with other organisations which are stakeholders in the process of service delivery, for example, sharing technical knowledge.

13.6 TIMELINESS AND RESPONSIVENESS

Public systems management can be better in their responsiveness with the mechanism of timeliness. Customers' (citizens) feedback is a proactive instrument or an indicator of responsiveness. It specifically impacts the confidence of citizens in the ability of public services to meet their needs. The Organisation for Cooperation and Economic Development (OECD) has focused on timeliness in three areas of health, tax, and justice. They are briefly given below:

- **Health Care:** Waiting time is one measure of the timeliness of service delivery. Excessive waiting times may affect not only the perception of the quality of the service but also the expected impact of the service. For example, delaying a medical treatment can sometimes lead to adverse health effects and unnecessary hospitalisation at an acute stage. In addition, it can strain the doctor-patient relationship and reduce the trust of citizens in the health system. Still, waiting times may also reflect the fact that, in the absence of any other allocation factor, when services are provided entirely for free, time may become a variable of adjustment in case of limited supply. In general, understaffing,

poor organisation or shortage of hospital beds can all contribute to long waiting times for surgeries.

- **Tax Administration:** Several OECD member countries have included timeliness as a key performance standard for certain public services, notably tax administration. In many countries including India, citizens filing their tax returns electronically see their tax returns processed three to four times faster than citizens filing tax returns in paper form.
- **Justice:** Timeliness can also be especially important in determining the quality of justice systems. Delays can reflect badly on the capacity of justice systems to uphold the rule of law and to provide an efficient level playing field for resolving economic disputes, thus undermining confidence in the justice institutions. Delays can also create added costs as cases remain pending and economic situations unresolved, impeding prospects for future investment. Excessively short processing times on the other hand may undermine the need for due process. Trial length is one common indicator of timeliness in the justice sector. Beyond procedural and substantive differences across legal systems, however, the organisation of the justice system – including staffing and human resource management policies, use of IT and capabilities for managing the case load – can affect the time necessary for solving a case in court.

There are several initiatives being taken in India to ensure timely and responsive governance. The Right to Information Act, Citizen's Charters, Public Service Guarantee Act, mechanism of social audit, and so on are measures in this direction.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: (1) Use the space given below for your answers.

(2) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

1) What are the principles of New Public Service?

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2) Identify the areas of relationship between timeliness and responsiveness in public systems.

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13.7 CONCLUSION

In India, the public service is expected to demonstrate a strong service ethos in maintaining and stabilising India's institutional structure. The citizens have expectations from the government and the administration to deliver goods and services with

responsiveness. Although many workshops and programmes are being conducted by various training institutions for the public servants to be responsive, but it has been observed in various studies that the public service is insensitive to public needs. They at times have to go from one office to another to get their job done with no avail. There is also lack of integrity amongst the public officials which affects the governance. A citizen-friendly administration can be achieved only if it is responsive and considers the citizens as valued customers.

13.8 GLOSSARY

- Kudumbasree** : It is the community organisation of self-help groups of women. The term *kudumbasree* in Malayalam language means prosperity of the family. It is a community network that covers the entire state of Kerala. It consists of a three-tier structure with neighbourhood groups as primary level units, area development societies at the ward level, and the community development societies at the local government level. These work on range of issues such as health, nutrition, agriculture besides income generation activities.
- Public Service Guarantee Act** : The public service guarantee act is also known as Right to Public Services Act in some states. It provides for legislation and statutory laws that guarantee time bound delivery of services by the government to the citizen and provides mechanism for punishing the errant public servant who fails to provide the service stipulated under the statute within stipulated time.
- Social Audit** : It is the process of assessment of programmes and schemes with people's involvement and comparing official records with ground realities. Social audit examines and assesses the social impact of specific programmes and policies.
- Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 16** : SDG 16 deals with 'peace, justice and strong institutions' which relates to having a transparent, accountable and a participant society.
- Digital Footprint** : With the help of internet and social media, information and data can be disseminated quickly so that the opinions of citizens can be included in policy formulation.
- Rights-based Approach** : The administration must work for responsive governance based on the rights-based approach because it is a growing demand amongst the citizens.

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13.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress 1

1. Your answer should include the following points:
 - Responsive public governance is based in the responsiveness on the management of public systems which requires responding efficiently and effectively to people's real needs.
 - The term "responsiveness" refers to the practice of ensuring that clients (citizens in this case) are served helpfully and in a responsible way by government agencies and officials.
 - The service provider must listen to the needs of the client and help when he/she enters a government facility for some help.
 - It calls for an approach comprising of strategies; policies; programmes; activities and resources; and considering the aspirations and expectations of the people.
2. Your answer should include the following points:
 - Institutionalising Responsiveness Systems
 - New Collaborative and Participatory Mechanisms of Responsiveness
 - Digital Footprint
 - Diversity
 - Rights-based Approach

- Public Engagement
 - Ethical Public Servants
 - Technology and Innovation
 - Citizens' Charter
 - Public Services Accessibility
 - Comprehensible Rules and Laws
3. Your answer should include the following points:
- The Old Weberian Public Administration Model
 - New Public Management Model
 - New Public Service (NPS)
 - New Public Governance

Check Your Progress 2

1. Your answer should include the following points:
- Serve citizens, not customers
 - Seek the public interest
 - Value citizenship over entrepreneurship
 - Think strategically, act democratically
 - Recognise that accountability is not simple
 - Serve rather than steer
 - Value people, not just productivity
2. Your answer should include the following points:
- Health Care
 - Tax Administration
 - Justice

UNIT 14 TRANSPARENCY AND RIGHT TO INFORMATION*

Structure

- 14.0 Objectives
- 14.1 Introduction
- 14.2 Transparency and Citizens' Right to Information
- 14.3 Right to Information: The International Perspectives
- 14.4 Right to Information: The Indian Scenario
- 14.5 Right to Information Act 2005: Salient Features
- 14.6 Implementing Right to Information Act: The Way Forward
- 14.7 Conclusion
- 14.8 Glossary
- 14.9 References
- 14.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

14.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the relationship between transparency and citizens' right to information;
- Examine the right to information in an international perspective;
- Discuss the initiatives taken in India towards right to information;
- Analyse the salient features of Right to Information Act 2005; and
- Identify the tasks required for implementing the RTI Act.

14.1 INTRODUCTION

There is no denying that invisible government has become obsolete in this age of liberalisation and globalisation. There has been a universal trend in recent times towards transparency in governmental functioning. Consequently, the citizens' right to information is increasingly being recognised as an important instrument to promote openness, transparency, and accountability in public administration. In today's world, which has witnessed the far-reaching impact of information and communication technology revolution, the citizens of almost all countries, irrespective of their political systems and forms of government, are now very conscious that they must get the information they require from the public authorities as well as the private agencies entrusted with delivery of public services, relating to their administration, management, operations, policies, programmes, and decisions. This is possible only when the citizens have the requisite right to information, and the administration is accountable and transparent enough to provide them with necessary information as desired.

*Contributed by Prof. Jaytilak Guha Roy, Former Professor of Public Administration, Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi.

This Unit focuses on the pertinence or the need for right to information and how this can be achieved. It also examines the international and national perspectives on the issue.

14.2 TRANSPARENCY AND CITIZENS' RIGHT TO INFORMATION

The symbiotic relationship between sin and secrecy is now universally recognised. It has been observed that a government which operates in greater secrecy is more prone to corruption as compared to a government, which functions in greater openness. Therefore, the right to information is considered as a significant step in empowering citizens to combat State corruption.

Secondly, the right to information helps to strengthen the foundations of democracy. Unlike a totalitarian government, a democratic government needs to be based on the trust of the governed. It should, therefore, function in public view as much as possible so that the citizens know about its aims, policies and programmes and help the government to accomplish them. Maximum secrecy in governmental function, on the contrary, would alienate the government from the governed and thereby tend to promote corruption, nepotism and misuse or abuse of authority. Openness or transparency in governmental functioning is, therefore, regarded as an essential ingredient of democracy and the right to information as a fundamental democratic right.

Thirdly, democracy, to be effective and meaningful, should also have responsive administration which is a bilateral process. On the one side, administration needs to be citizen-centric, which implies that it should be responsive to the citizens' legitimate needs, aspirations, and grievances. The citizens, on the other side, are required to be cooperative and vigilant. For, it is the eternal vigilance of enlightened citizens which facilitates accountability and prevents arbitrariness in public administration and brings it closer to the citizens. An eternal and enlightened vigilance is, thus, the best guarantee of democratic government. There is no doubt that the right to know is an effective means for the citizens' enlightenment. For, it is this right which gives them access to government departments and documents and thereby enables them to acquire knowledge of what is happening in the government.

Fourthly, the right to information tends to remove unnecessary secrecy surrounding the decision-making process in the government, and thereby helps to improve the quality of decision-making in public policy and administration. It also enables the citizens to know about the government decisions and the basis on which they are made so that they can exercise sound judgment on the merits of public policies and respond appropriately to influence the process of policy formulation and decision-making in public governance.

Last but not the least, the right to information is an effective means to strengthen grassroots democracy and ensure people's participation in local governance and development activities. It would also bring the local governments under public scrutiny and thereby help them to avoid costly mistakes. To quote James Madison, one of the founding fathers of the American Constitution, "A popular government without popular information or means of acquiring it, is but a prologue to a farce or a tragedy or perhaps both".

14.3 RIGHT TO INFORMATION: THE INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES

There is a long history of the people's struggle for securing the right to information. Sweden was the first country to provide freedom of information to its citizens as far back as 1766. The Constitutional provision guaranteeing this freedom was adopted in that year, as part of the Freedom of the Press Act, one of Sweden's four basic Constitutional laws. It was the outcome of an "intense struggle" during the last half of the 18th century between the two main political parties of Sweden, the Hats and the Caps. With the defeat of the Hats in 1765 after a long term in office, the Caps inserted the principle of public access in the Freedom of the Press Act as a reaction to their frustration over excessive administrative secrecy as well as press censorship under the Hats regime. Subsequently, the principle was accepted as a part of "the normal political life of Sweden" (Rowat, 1980).

In other countries, however, the developments in this regard have been far more recent. Among other Scandinavian countries, Finland enacted the Freedom of Information (FOI) legislation in 1951, followed by Denmark and Norway in 1970. The United States enacted its FOI Act in 1966, exactly two hundred years after Sweden. The Act was amended in 1974 to limit the exemptions and to provide for penalties against those government officials who would be found withholding information or treating FOI requests in an arbitrary or capricious fashion. Austria, France, and the Netherlands passed this legislation during the 70s, while Australia, Canada and New Zealand enacted it in 1982-83. Various states or provinces of the United States, Canada and Australia have also enacted their own FOI legislations.

Ireland enacted the FOI Act in 1997, which came into force in 1998. In the Republic of South Africa, the Right of Access to Information is a Constitutional right, which has been further reinforced with the Promotion of Access to Information Act, 2000. The objectives of the Act, *inter alia*, include promotion of a culture of human rights and social justice, imparting accountability and good governance and enabling public participation in decision making by public bodies that affect their rights. The Act contains two separate parts, each dealing with the right of access to records of public bodies and private agencies, respectively.

In Bulgaria, the Access to Information Act was enacted in June 2000. The scope of its applicability is wide, since the term "public information", under the Act, has been construed to mean "any information relating to social life", which gives the citizens an opportunity to form their own opinion about the activities of the persons obligated to provide information. The Act gives the right of access to information not only to the citizens but also to the non-citizens as well as the legal entities.

The Japanese law relating to the Disclosure of Information held by administrative organs is applicable to defined "administrative organs". It seeks to ensure that the government is accountable to the people for its various operations, and to contribute to the promotion of a fair and democratic administration that is subject to the people's accurate understanding and criticism.

Thailand enacted its Official Information Act in 1997. It is a very short legislation and lacks clarity on certain important aspects, such as the procedure for receiving and processing of information requests and the appeal and complaint procedures (Shankari, 2000).

In Britain, a White Paper called ‘Your Right to Know’ was published in 1997 and three years later, on 30th November 2000, the Freedom of Information Act received the Royal Assent. The Freedom of Information Act 2000 requires each of the public authorities to adopt and maintain a publication scheme whose purpose is to specify the classes of information that the authority publishes or intends to publish, the form in which this is or will be done; and whether there is any charge for the information. Each scheme must be approved by the Information Commissioner who is an independent public official responsible directly to Parliament.

Overall, the FOI legislation in developed democracies has three fundamental features.

- A legal right of access to government records without a demonstrated need to know;
- Specific exemptions to protect national security, personal privacy, law enforcement and the like; and
- Where access is refused, a right of appeal lies independent of government officials (Bell and Watchirs, 1988).

Check Your Progress 1

Note: i) Use the space given below for your answers.
ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

1. Give reasons for the need of Right to Information.

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2. List important milestones from international perspective in the evolution of Right to information.

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14.4 RIGHT TO INFORMATION: THE INDIAN SCENARIO

In India, the first political commitment to the citizen’s Right to Information came up on the eve of the Lok Sabha elections in 1977 as a corollary to public resentment against suppression of information, press censorship and abuse of authority during the internal emergency of 1975-77. In its election manifesto of 1977, the Janata Party promised “an open government”, and declared that it would not misuse the intelligence services and governmental authority for personal and partisan ends. Pursuant to this commitment, the Janata government headed by Morarji Desai constituted in 1977, a

working group to ascertain if the Official Secrets Act, 1923, could be modified to facilitate greater flow of information to the public. The working group comprising officials from the Cabinet Secretariat and the Ministries of Home Affairs, Finance and Defence, which laboured for few months only to recommend that the Act of 1923 should be retained without change. This 'no change' recommendation was far from popular expectations. The very composition of the group, however, was indicative of the kind of recommendation made by it. The bureaucracy by its nature revels in secrecy, and hence, any other kind of recommendation would have been an exception. The country was ultimately back to 1923 that is to 'square one', as it was contended to regulate its communication system with "We, the People of India", along the network of the colonial Official Secrets Act (Maheshwari, 1980).

The events, which helped create political commitment to the Right to Information for the second time, had resemblance with the historical context, out of which the principle of public access to information evolved in Sweden. The National Front government's renewed commitment to this Right was the outcome of the people's frustration over the earlier government's reluctance to part with the information relating to Bofors and other deals (Roy, 1990). In its 1989 Lok Sabha Election Manifesto, the National Front committed itself to "open government" and declared unequivocally that "People's Right to Information shall be guaranteed through constitutional provisions". Reiterating this commitment, the then Prime Minister V.P. Singh, in his first broadcast to the nation in December 1989 said, "We will have to increase access to information. If the government functions in full public view, wrong doings will be minimised. To this end, Official Secrets Act will be amended, and we will make the functioning of the government more transparent. Right to Information will be enshrined in our Constitution". Despite such a strong commitment, there was actually no headway towards transparency and openness in our governmental functioning due to the early fall of the National Front government.

In 1997, the Government of India had set up a Working Group on Right to Information and Promotion of Open and Transparent Government. It was entrusted with the responsibility of examining the feasibility of introducing a Right to Information Act. The working group accepted the following broad principles for the formulation of legislation.

1. Disclosure of information should be the rule and secrecy the exception.
2. Exceptions should be clearly defined.
3. There should be an independent mechanism for adjudication of disputes between the citizens and public authority (Mathur, 2003). Later, the Conference of Chief Ministers held in 1997, in its Action Plan for Effective and Responsive Government at the Central and State levels, reiterated the introduction of legislation on Right to Information, as there is secrecy and lack of transparency in many governmental decision-making activities.

Subsequently, the National Agenda for governance of the multi-party coalition i.e., the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) declared: "Our first commitment to the people is to give a stable, honest, transparent, and efficient government capable of accomplishing all-round development. For this the government shall introduce time-bound programme of needed administrative reforms..." In pursuance with this declaration, the NDA government introduced the Freedom of Information (FOI) Bill, 2000 in the Parliament. This proposed Bill, however, had evoked lot of controversy on various issues. Some of them are notably as follows:

- a) The bill exempts from disclosure "information exchanged in confidence between the central and state governments or any of their authorities or agencies". It is

commonly felt that this is too wide a clause to cover a lot of such information, which should otherwise be available to the people.

- b) A major lacuna of the bill is that it does not specifically provide for penalties against the officials who, in violation of the law, would either refuse to provide information or give false, misleading, or incomplete information.
- c) In this age of economic liberalisation, when the governments are keen on outsourcing many of their traditional functions to private agencies and allowing foreign direct investments in telecom, power, banking and other major sectors, the bill, however, does not apply to the private sector. In contrast, the South African law enacted in the same year has specifically brought the private sector under its purview so that there could be no disparity between the public sector and the private sector engaged in similar commercial activity.
- d) The most serious shortcoming of the bill lies in that it provides for appeals only within the government bodies. It not only bars jurisdiction of courts but also ensures that no appeal should lie even with an independent body.

It is pertinent to mention that in response to the petitions filed by the Common Cause and the Centre for Public Interest Litigation, the Supreme Court reportedly decided to scrutinise the proposed FOI Bill to ascertain whether the government has given enough power to the citizens to know what they want about governance. Accordingly, it had adjourned the hearing till January 2003. This was indeed a welcome step against the backdrop of lack of political will to recognise people's right to know. Meanwhile, the FOI bill had been somewhat hurriedly passed by the Lok Sabha on 4th December 2002 without plugging the various loopholes.

In pursuance with its National Common Minimum Programme, the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) Government led by the Congress and supported by the left parties enacted the Right to Information (RTI) Act on 11th May 2005, which received the President's assent on 15th June, 2005 and came into force w.e.f. 12th October, 2005. It applies to the Union and State agencies, local government and even societies and trusts which receive public funds or are controlled and regulated by the government or its agencies. "The sole aim of the Act is to develop informed and aware citizenry which will pave the way for transformation from government to good governance by increasing people's participation. This Act makes government accountable, responsive, responsible, efficient and transparent" (Dalal and Singh, 2016).

14.5 RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT 2005: SALIENT FEATURES

The Right to Information Act 2005 is a comprehensive legislation which includes provisions for independent appeals, penalties for non-compliance, proactive disclosure and clarity and simplicity of the access process.

Its salient features include:

- **A Broad Definition of Information**

The Act confers a right to "information" rather than just "records" or "documents". Information includes permitting the inspection of public works. It also covers "information relating to a private body which can be accused by a public authority under any law".

- **Proactive Disclosure**

The list of information to be proactively published by public authorities is broad. In addition to standard provisions commonly contained in access list, public authorities are to publish: the budget allocated to each agency, including plans, proposed expenditure and disbursements; the manner of execution of subsidy programmes, including the amounts allocated and beneficiaries; recipients of concessions, permits, licenses; and relevant facts while formulating policies.

- **Appointment of Public Information Officers (PIOs)**

The Act provides for the appointment of PIOs in all administrative units/ offices as may be necessary to provide information to persons requesting it- Assistant PIOs are also to be appointed at each sub-divisional level. These provisions are designed to bring access closer to the people by ensuring that applicants can submit requests in their local areas.

- **Time Limit**

The Act lays down the limit as thirty days for normal applications and 40 days where a third-party submission is to be called for. In a novel approach, these time limits are reduced to a mere 48 hours where the information sought “concerns the life and liberty of a person”.

- **Fees**

The application fee is to be reasonable, and no fee shall be charged from persons who are below the poverty line as determined by the government. Where a public authority fails to comply with time limits under the Act, the information shall be provided free of charge to them.

- **Information Commissions**

The Act provides for the establishment of Information Commissions at the Centre and in all the states comprising Chief Information Commissioner and ten Information Commissioners. The Commissions can make any order required to bring about compliance with the law, including release of documents, appointment of PIOs and publication of specified information.

- **Penalties**

Every PIO can be penalised Rs. 250 per day up to a maximum of Rs. 25,000 for not accepting application, delaying information release without reasonable cause, and providing incomplete, incorrect, misleading information.

The Act exempts providing of certain categories of information. These include cabinet papers, information covering a wide range of central intelligence and security agencies and that, which is more than twenty years old, etc.

14.6 IMPLEMENTING RIGHT TO INFORMATION ACT: THE WAY FORWARD

Our experience reveals that mere enactment of RTI legislation would not be enough to ensure open and transparent public administration. It would just be the beginning of a long and costly process (Roy, 2003)

The most challenging task for operationalising the Right to Information Act would be to bring about major changes in our administrative system to evolve and facilitate an altogether new culture of openness in place of the existing and age-old culture of secrecy. The revamping of our administrative system in this direction require multi-pronged measures, which would *inter alia* include:

- Formulation of a comprehensive training policy at the national level with a view to inculcating right attitudes among the public functionaries in the context of open government. Such a training policy would cover all such aspects as identification of training needs for these functionaries at different levels, training of trainers, preparation of training modules and materials for pre-service, in-service, and special orientation training courses and periodical evaluation of training designs and methods.
- Introduction of an effective system of reward for enthusiastic service rendered by public functionaries with regard to the dissemination of information as also punishment for those who would be found withholding information in an arbitrary and capricious manner.
- Review and revision of some of the basic concepts of civil services retained since the days of the colonial administration, such as the civil service anonymity.
- Suitable changes in the prevailing practice of classification of government documents to put an end to “indiscriminate and unnecessary: classification of information. This calls for a well-planned and enlightened information policy as an important part of government’s public relations policy.

Last but not the least, implementation of the Right to information would require an efficient information management system with the help of sophisticated information technology. The American experience, for instance, reveals that information management is a “multi-faceted process involving the collection, processing, storage, transmission and use of information”, and consequently, “the costs of providing information have been significantly higher than Congress anticipated” (Feinberg, 1986). For a developing country such as India, the cost constraints would be much more since our governments will have to bear additional expenses to provide for our weaker groups’ accessibility to information relating to various government schemes and programmes for their welfare and development. While acknowledging cost constraints as a genuine problem, the benefits that may be derived from an efficient system of information management in government departments would also need to be duly assessed and analysed. Moreover, with the increasing use of information technology in our government departments and offices, it should no longer be very difficult in the near future to evolve an effective and useful system of information management in the government (Roy, 2006).

Check Your Progress 2

Note: (i) Use the space given below for your answers.

(ii) Check your answers with those given at the end of the Unit.

1) State briefly the salient features of RTI Act, 2005.

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- 2) List some of the measures required for revamping our administrative system to operationalise the RTI Act.

- 3) Explain the process of an efficient information management system

14.7 CONCLUSION

The mere conferment of the Right to Information without changing the prevalent style of governance would make the entire exercise futile. In the context of our present scenario characterised by the lack of political will and the reluctant attitude of bureaucracy to recognise the people's Right to Information, the role of civil society organisations would be crucial and significant in ushering in a new era of open, transparent, and accountable governance. This is more so for a country like India, which has the unique distinction of being the world's largest functional democracy for more than seven decades. It is due to the success of our vibrant democracy, albeit aberrations, that many civil society organisation have been playing a catalytic role in various fields of public life. The more these organisations come forward to enlighten and mobilise the people at the grass roots, the more would be the realisation of the immense potential of the Right to Information.

14.8 GLOSSARY

Transparency : According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, "Transparency stands for the quality of something such as glass that allows you to see through it or something that allows you to see the truth easily". Hence, the term 'transparency' in administration means that the functioning and activities of administration should be known, open and accessible to the people in all reasonable respects.

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14.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. Your answer should include the following points:
 - Right to Information is considered a significant step in empowering citizens to combat State corruption.
 - It helps to strengthen the foundation of democracy.
 - It ensures administrative responsiveness towards citizens' legitimate needs, aspirations and demands. Also, it makes citizens vigilant and cooperative.
 - It improves the quality of decision making.
 - It strengthens grass roots democracy and ensures people's participation in local governance and development activities.
2. Your answer should include the following points:
 - The enactment of Freedom of Press Act in Sweden in 1766.
 - Recent developments in enacting Freedom of Information legislation in Scandinavian Countries.

- Similar measures in Ireland, Japan, Bulgaria, Thailand.
- The enactment of Freedom of Information Act in Britain in 2000.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Your answer should include the following points:

- Broad definition of “Information”.
- Proactive disclosure of information.
- Establishment of Information Commissions.
- Application Fees.
- Time Limits.
- Penalties.
- Exemptions.

2) Your answer should include the following points:

- Formulation of a comprehensive training policy at the national level.
- Introduction of an effective system of reward and punishment for public functionaries dealing with information.
- Review of civil service anonymity.
- Suitable changes in the prevailing practice of classification of government documents.

3) Your answer should include the following points:

- A multi-faceted process.
- Involves collection, processing, storage, transmission and use of information.
- Extent of cost constraints.

UNIT 15 REFORMS AND CHANGE MANAGEMENT*

Structure

- 15.0 Objectives
- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 Reforms and Change Management: Meaning
- 15.3 Administrative Reforms in India
- 15.4 Public Systems Management Reforms in India
- 15.5 Change Management in Public Systems
- 15.6 Problems in the Implementation of Public Systems Management Reforms in India
- 15.7 Conclusion
- 15.8 Glossary
- 15.9 References
- 15.10 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

15.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this Unit, you should be able to:

- Explain the meaning and the concept of reform and change management;
- Describe the administrative reforms in India;
- Discuss the public systems management reforms in India;
- Elaborate on change management in public systems; and
- Analyse the problems of implementation of reforms in India.

15.1 INTRODUCTION

The world is moving from an input democracy to an output democracy. Input democracy is simply an indirect *Input* democratic model, also known as the Collectivist model. It states that the sovereign people have a common interest in a State and delegate authority to the politicians and civil servants for fulfilment of collective interests. On the other hand, the *Output* model maintains an important set of contacts with the society, whether individual or organised interests. Although this model does not ignore the bureaucratic control, it emphasises on transparency, information, and legitimacy. It focuses more on the managerial accountability and *ex post* judgement of performance.

Need for reform and change: It is imperative for Nation states to implement reform and change management in the governments and their bureaucracies to have the capacity to deal with the changing governmental activities. Thus, the need for reforms cannot be stressed enough. Public sector reforms are essential to increase the ability of the political-

*Contributed by Dr. Anupama Mahajan, Former Post-Doctoral Fellow (Public Administration), Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla.

administrative leadership to reinvent the public systems. However, they are affected by external forces like globalisation and changes in the social, institutional, economic, political, cultural, and technological environment.

New Public Management (NPM) emerged in the 1980s which refuted the traditional public administration's emphasis on scientific management and administrative principles. NPM argues that all managements face similar challenges and hence should be approached in similar ways. There should be no differentiation according to the type of structure or task. NPM considers:

- more accountability of public managers; and
- a customer-driven approach that uses bottom-up processes that allow each agency and its clients to determine public policy.

NPM does not consider the rights and influence of voters through the channel of elections or that the clients can provide a stable democratic system but aims at efficiency, quality, and direct influence on public services.

Post NPM: Post NPM reforms began in the 1990s that focused on coordination and integration strategies. It propagated a new concept of "joined-up-government" (JUG) in 1997 in the U.K. by the then Prime Minister Tony Blair. JUG was the opposite of departmentalism and the tunnel vision of vertical structures/divisions. The governments must work in coordination with each other rather than wasting resources by mismanagement due to lack of coordination, for example, in India, the Public Works Department re-metals the streets and roads but as soon as they complete their work, the Telecom department comes into dig them up for laying of cables. This example is a classic case of lack of coordination. Hence, the JUG approach brought in the democratic features to increase coordination.

The aim of public systems is to promote the welfare of the public through efficient and effective administration. Generally, there is more focus on measurable outputs rather than outcomes because the employees feel that their individual efforts may not produce any results. Successful reforms have indicated improved performance on various fronts.

15.2 REFORMS AND CHANGE MANAGEMENT: MEANING

Reform and change are used synonymously or interchangeably. Change is a modification made in an organisation's structure, technology, or the behavioural patterns of the administrative officers. The reasons for change are external as well as internal factors. External factors include market situation; technology; government laws and regulations; and economic situations. The internal factors are the organisational strategy; workforce; technology and equipment; and employee attitudes. Change management in the 1950s was amidst the tussle between top-down or bottom-up management and new styles of management. To elaborate, the top-down approach does not rely much on the sub-systems in which the centralised top management acts as a coordinating agency that sets rules and regulations. The bottom-up approach has multiple sub-systems with a high degree of employee participation. The organisation develops from the bottom up. Changes in management are usually resisted by public sector organisations due to uncertainties of outcomes.

Requirements of reforms and change management

Increasing utilisation of appropriate change management strategies and methods require:

- A highly flexible approach to result-based planning, budgeting and management that can capture results and costing, as demanded by change management.
- Training for development agency personnel in process facilitation, negotiation and other specific change management methods and skills; and
- Capacity development in this field requires experts, local and international, who have not only technical expertise but also coaching, management development and mentoring skills, to facilitate rather than direct.

15.3 ADMINISTRATIVE REFORMS IN INDIA

Administrative reforms aim to bring about changes in governance to improve the public goods and service delivery system in a rapidly changing environment. F.W. Riggs said, “Administrative reform is a problem of dynamic balancing”. At the outset, it is important to accept that the reforming civil bureaucracies is not an easy task due to lack of commitment of political leadership; strong pressure groups against reforms; a weak democratic governance system and finally an effective public participatory environment. The modern-day citizens have a heightened awareness and increased expectations from the governments. As a result, the governments keep on increasing the number of public agencies and administrators. Such a State can be called an “administrative state”.

Public systems are reformed mainly through changes in administrative structures, political changes, legal systems, and behavioural changes in the employees as well as the management. Paul H. Appleby said, in 1950s, that the Indian Administrative Service was the best in the world. Administrative reforms in India began in 1942 with Secretariat Reorganisation Committee under Girija Shankar Bajpai and have been continuing since then under various committees and commissions. Indian public systems had problems over the period and the issue was dealt with setting up of the Administrative Reforms Commission in 1966 but very few recommendations were accepted.

In 2005, the Government of India constituted the Second Administrative Reforms Commission(ARC) under the Chairmanship of Veerappa Moily. It took 4 years to submit 15 reports in 2009. NITI Aayog accepted all its recommendations in 2018 and suggested the establishment of the Third ARC as soon as possible considering the rapidly changing environment that includes political, technological, economic, social, and cultural aspects.

Major Recommendations of the Second Administrative Reforms Commission (ARC)

It is not possible to provide all the recommendations of the Second ARC here, but the major ones are given below:

1. **Right to Information:** The Right to Information Act (RTI), 2005, has helped the communities in accessing valuable information with the help of a simple process of an application. Given below are the recommendations regarding RTI:
 - **The Official Secrets Act, 1923,** must be repealed and replaced by introducing a chapter in the National Security Act.

- **The Oath of Secrecy** that is taken by the ministers when they assume the office must be done away with and an oath of transparency needs to be administered.
 - The **Armed forces** must have exemption from RTI while they can appoint their own Public Information Officers (PIOs).
 - The period of classification of secrets must be **30 years**.
2. **Human Capital:** Under the government's flagship programme, Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), human capital needs to be unlocked by running various awareness campaigns by using radio and television in local languages. Given below are some recommendations concerning unlocking the human capital:
- The public systems must ensure the outcomes by studying the identified parameters, conducting of pilot surveys and evaluating impact.
 - Similar programmes must be integrated into one plan for better coordination.
 - Funds must be directly transferred to the beneficiaries through Aadhar linked bank accounts and to the districts in which the Panchayats fix the target level.
 - Local governments must be strengthened by training the staff with the systems and processes.
3. **Disaster Crisis Management:** In the name of industrial development, nature and environment have been neglected which is resulting in disasters. The Second ARC gave the following recommendations to avert or deal with the crisis arising out of disasters:
- **The Disaster Management Act, 2005**, must be amended to include issues like classification of disaster levels and disaster risk resilience. It had to be invoked for the first time in India during the COVID 19 in 2020 for a national lockdown for 21 days.
 - **Disaster response teams** must be set up at all levels of government with an apex body at the top to coordinate all efforts.
 - A new law must be enacted to establish institutional framework for data collection and operations of inter-state rivers to avoid disasters, for example, the release of water from reservoirs that will impact the other states.
4. **Ethical Governance:** The Second ARC recommended that governance requires a total haul-up regarding ethics as given below:
- The state must do political financing partially to legitimise corrupt funding from large industrial organisations.
 - It recommended that schemes like Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLAD) and the same for MLAs must be abolished.

- ‘Collusive bribery’ needs to be made an offence via an amendment in the Prevention of Corruption Act.
 - Whistle blowers must be given appropriate protection.
5. **Local Governance:** Democratic and good governance can be made effective if the rural and urban local governance is made stronger. The recommendations of the Second ARC are:
- The Legislative Council which is composed of members elected by the local bodies must be constituted with the directions of the Parliament.
 - There is an imbalance between the urban and rural representation in the legislative bodies which must be corrected by the amendment of Articles 81, 82, 170, 330 and 332.
 - Strengthening of local bodies must be done by raising capacity-building; decentralised planning; accountability and transparency and other elements of administration with the use of latest information and technology.
6. **Terrorism and Extremism:** The Second ARC was clear on the issue of control and avoidance of terrorism. It suggested the following:
- Negotiations with the extremist organisations with a plan of action.
 - Establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) to be limited and avoidance of use of prime agricultural land for it.
 - Discrimination based on caste and tribe must be ended by taking appropriate legal action.
 - Increase in the number of paramilitary forces and armed forces to combat terrorism. Latest defense tools and gadgets must be employed to avoid any terrorist incidents.
7. **Social Capital:** India has a growing number of non-profit organisations, but they must be regulated according to laws and rules. The recommendations are:
- New legal framework must be drafted, enacted, and executed efficiently to prevent and hold liable for any irregularities or fraudulent activities.
 - Corporate Social responsibility is an efficient way to hold the corporate world responsible for their social duties. However, a system of accreditation by enacting a new law must be set up who ask for government funding.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: (i) Use the space given below for your answers.

(ii) Check your answers with those give at the end of the Unit

1) Discuss in brief the need for reform and change in public systems.

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- 2) Explain the meaning of reform and change management.

- 3) Discuss the major administrative reforms that have been recommended in India by the Second Administrative Reforms Commission.

15.4 PUBLIC SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT REFORMS IN INDIA

The National Institute for Transforming India (NITI Aayog) replaced the Planning Commission in 2015, to make the institution more dynamic. Being a premier planning body, it has made tremendous efforts to improve the public systems by reforms. It promotes cooperative federalism and competitive cooperative federalism. It reduced the number of Centrally Sponsored Schemes; made Three-Year Action Plan and the Strategy Document for New India @75. The reforms suggested by NITI Aayog are numerous.

The NITI Aayog in its National Strategy for New India@75, defines objectives for 2022-23. It identified around forty-one crucial areas that need reforms under four broad categories. These are Drivers (that include growth, employment and labour reforms, industry, financial inclusion and so on) Infrastructure, Inclusion and Governance which focused on several issues including agriculture, farming digital connectivity in rural areas, implementation of Ayushman Bharat Programme, improving the quality of school education etc.

The documents published by the NITI Aayog, mentioned above, outline various reforms in public systems essential to achieve good governance.

Financial Management Reforms

The financial reforms are essential for making the financial structure of public systems strong. Public Financial Management (PFM) includes all aspects of resource mobilisation and expenditure management in government. The financial reforms also comprise debt and cash management, budgetary process, accounting and auditing systems and information technology. Globalisation has necessitated the judicious use of funds so that socio-economic growth can take place at a comparable pace as the other economies. Development cannot take place without finances and hence, it is

essential that they are utilised in the most appropriate way so that money is not misused. Corruption and accountability are inter-linked which makes it important that the government controls corruption by putting reformed systems in place. Financial sector reforms, consequentially, are a part of the overall governance of public systems reforms.

Outcome-based Budget: In India, performance budgets failed and since 2005, outcome budgeting was initiated. It focuses on the development outcomes of all government projects. The outcomes are expressed in terms of qualitative targets and achievements. The Government of India introduced the 'Performance Monitoring and Evaluation System' (PMES) in all government departments and agencies for better performance management. This initiative started in 2009 seeks to strengthen performance in delivery of budgetary objectives. The main objectives of the scheme are to articulate outputs (where possible outcomes) of the schemes managed by ministries and departments, evaluate their performance and hold them accountable.

Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM): The FRBM Act was passed in 2003 as a Central Act and was followed by the State Governments. This Act was passed in response to the poor situation of public finance at all levels of the Government in the late nineties. The Act is intended to establish financial discipline to reduce fiscal deficit and introduce transparency in India's fiscal management system. The long-term objective of the Act is to achieve fiscal stability and to give the Reserve Bank of India flexibility to deal with inflation. It was enacted to introduce more equitable distribution of India's debt over years. The Act has been amended several times.

Demonetisation: The term demonetisation is an act of cancelling the legal tender status of a currency unit in circulation. The demonetisation that took place on November 8, 2016 was done with the objective of reducing corruption and to remove the menace of black money in the economy. It had mixed response politically, but it helped in:

- i. formalising the economy;
- ii. Widening the tax base;
- iii. Growth in direct tax collection;
- iv. Identification of *benami* properties; and
- v. reduced corruption and increased transparency.

Goods and Services (GST) Act, 2016: The GST Act, 2016 reformed the tax system by abolishing the large number of central and state taxes such as Value Added Tax (VAT), excise duty, service tax, central sales tax, additional customs duty, and special additional customs duty. It is a consumption based indirect tax levied on the supply of goods and services. It is imposed at every step in the production process. Goods and services are divided into five different slabs for collection of tax. It came into effect from July 1, 2017. The tax rates, rules and regulations are governed by the GST Council which consists of Finance ministers of the Central governments and all the states. It has helped the economy to integrate itself for a common national market.

Digitisation: India is moving towards a cashless economy in tune with changes in public systems management. Payments now for many of the services are accepted digitally at most of the web portals, for utility bills, school fees etc.

The Second ARC suggested many reforms to strengthen the PFM system in India. Some major recommendations are given below:

Capacity Building: India is in the process of its infrastructure building to enhance its economic and social sectors to keep up with the emerging economies around the globe. Proper accounts and smooth flow of funds are essential to carry out various projects and plans. The financial system must upgrade its processes to do so.

Audit: India has followed a strict code of accounts and audit since the fourth century B.C. which was laid down by Kautilya. Internal and external audit must be according to the standards set by international agencies to remove any errors and frauds in the misappropriation of public funds. The internal audit system must gear to evaluate that the unit cost of delivery/outcome is as per the benchmark developed for this purpose. On the other hand, the external audit must be carried out by an institutionalised method which checks that there are no

- unrealistic budgetary estimates;
- delays in the implementation of projects;
- lapses of accountability; and
- Delayed audit reports.

15.5 CHANGE MANAGEMENT IN PUBLIC SYSTEMS

Change management is essential to survive in a rapidly changing world. It is an ongoing process which pervades all levels of a public organisation so that its systems run efficiently and effectively. Change management is the process of enabling people understand the need for change and to motivate them to take actions which result in sustained changes in behaviour. Given below are the major aspects of change management in public systems:

1. **Performance Measurement and Management:** A performance-oriented approach to change management involves criteria to measure and the metrics for the evaluation of change performance. The indicators of change performance are important to measure the outcome or the interventions. A balance performance model comprises four main determinants of a balanced performance model, which are:
 - Dimensions – criteria to measure performance;
 - Levels – indicators for performance evaluation;
 - Determinants – what results in change performance; and
 - Interventions – ways to influence the determinants for a better outcome.
2. **Multi-level Architecture:** Change in an organisation cannot happen at one level, whether it is the top, middle or the low level of management. A hierarchical planning system is needed that involves a strategic, tactical and an operational level. The organisation, group, or an individual, all need to change.
3. **Patterns of Communication:** Any organisation works with efficient and smooth flow of communication and so does a public organisation. One-way or two-way communication determines the level of performance and change. There can be direct one way or two-way communication, mass broadcast which have different effects.

4. **Strategy:** Strategy in change management is essential and can involve several elements like people; processes; patterns; technology; communication and behaviour. The drivers for change must be decided by the change agents in the beginning so that there is no confusion in execution of the model.
5. **Technology, Internet, and Globalisation:** Globalisation has rapidly increased because of the use of internet and advancements in technology. All these three elements are inter-related and bring about change. Computerisation in government departments and agencies has brought a positive change in governance. It has remarkably changed the way the delivery of public goods and services is carried out.

Hence, change management is an essential way to achieve effective ways to improve governance through the public systems.

15.6 PROBLEMS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT REFORMS IN INDIA

India has seen numerous committees and commissions that have been set up for reforms in the public systems to improve governance, but the problem lies in their implementation. Some of the challenges and problems faced in the implementation of reforms are given below in brief:

1. **Institutional Capacity:** The bureaucracy is said to lack the commitment and capacity to implement the reforms backed by the political will. Public participation is also at an exceptionally low level. Hence, it is important that the institutional capacity is brought up to the required standards for their implementation.
2. **Viability of Reforms:** Reforms need to be a continuous process because the environment keeps changing economically as well as politically. Outdated reforms hamper administrative systems; thus, they must be sustainable so that they are implementation-worthy whichever political party is in power.
3. **Constitutionally-binding:** Most of the reforms and changes that are suggested by committees and commissions are mere suggestions. They do not have the mandate, that is, the reforms are not binding on the public organisations to implement them.
4. **Resistance to Change:** The Indian bureaucracy generally works with a rigid attitude and in a secretive environment which they inherited from the British civil service. Reforms in their working and operations have not been fruitful because of their attitude of resistance to change.
5. **Political Will:** The implementation of reforms and change management requires a proactive political will which is lacking in India.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: (i) Use the space given below for your answers.

(ii) Check your answers with those give at the end of the Unit.

- 1) What are the financial management reforms that have been introduced in India?

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- 2) Discuss major aspects of change management in public systems.

- 3) Identify the major problems faced in the implementation of reforms in public systems in India.

15.7 CONCLUSION

Any reform process to be consistent and effective needs to adhere to bringing sound change management at all levels and stages. There is a need to evaluate the practical implications of reforms measures. The reform process needs to take cognisance of national and local circumstances, organisational diversities. Another key factor to be kept in view is to involve people in the reform process, which in the long run would lessen the resistance to change. Human dimension to the reform process shall prove effective in the long run. The Indian experiment of creating a separate department of personnel that deals with various aspects of reform process is significant. A change management strategy needs to be comprehensive that takes into cognisance not only technology, skills, expertise etc., but also the human aspects.

15.8 GLOSSARY

- Ayushman Bharat Yojana** : Ayushman Bharat Yojana is a scheme that aims to help economically vulnerable people in India who need health care services. It is a National Health Protection Scheme which has been renamed as Pradhan mantri Jan Arogya Yojana that aims at making secondary and tertiary health care services cashless.
- Capacity Building** : Capacity building for governance is defined as a strategy aimed at improving the efficiency, effectiveness, and responsiveness of governance performance, by concentrating the attention to the development dimension, human resources, strengthening the organisation and the institution.

Collusive Bribery	: It is intended to describe the phenomena where executives from corporations dishonestly collude with government officials for a mutual unlawful benefit.
Corporate Social Responsibility	: It refers to practices and policies undertaken by corporations to pursue social objectives in addition to maximising profits.
Ethical Governance	: It can be described as the right and fair conduct of the governmental activities to serve the larger public interest.
Human Capital	: The skills, knowledge, and experience possessed by an individual or population, viewed in terms of their value or cost to an organisation or country is human capital.
Joined-up-government (JUG)	: JUG was introduced in 1997 in the U.K. by the then Prime Minister Tony Blair. JUG was the opposite of departmentalism and the tunnel vision of vertical silos. The governments must work in coordination with each other rather than wasting resources by mismanagement due to lack of coordination.
Social Capital	: Social capital has been defined as the networks together with shared norms, values and understanding that facilitate co-operation within or among groups.
Special Economic Zones	: These are areas in which the business and trade laws are different from the rest of the country. These offer competitive infrastructure, duty free exports, tax incentives and other measures designed to make it easier to conduct business.
Whistle blower	: It is a person who, usually an employee, who exposes information or activity within a private, public, or government organisation that is deemed illegal, fraud, unsafe, or abuse of taxpayer funds.

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15.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. Your answer should include the following points:
 - Input and output democracy
 - Increasing the ability of the political-administrative leadership to reinvent the public systems.
 - NPM and Post NPM
2. Your answer should include the following points:
 - Change is a modification made in an organisation's structure, technology or the behavioural patterns of the personnel;
 - The reasons for change and reforms can be both external and internal factors.
 - It can be top-down or bottom-up.
 - It requires a flexible approach, training and capacity building.
3. Your answer should include the following points:

The major recommendations of the Second ARC include:

 - Right to Information
 - Human Capital
 - Disaster Crisis Management
 - Ethical Governance
 - Local Governance
 - Terrorism and Extremism
 - Social Capital

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1. Your answer should include the following points:
 - Outcome based budget
 - Financial Reforms and Budget Management (FRBM)
 - Demonetisation

- Goods and Services (GST) Act, 2016
 - Digitisation
2. Your answer should include the following points:
- Performance Measurement and Management
 - Multi-level Architecture
 - Patterns of Communication
 - Strategy
 - Technology, Internet, and Globalisation
3. Your answer should include the following points:
- Institutional Capacity
 - Viability of Reforms
 - Constitutionally-binding
 - Resistance to Change
 - Political Will



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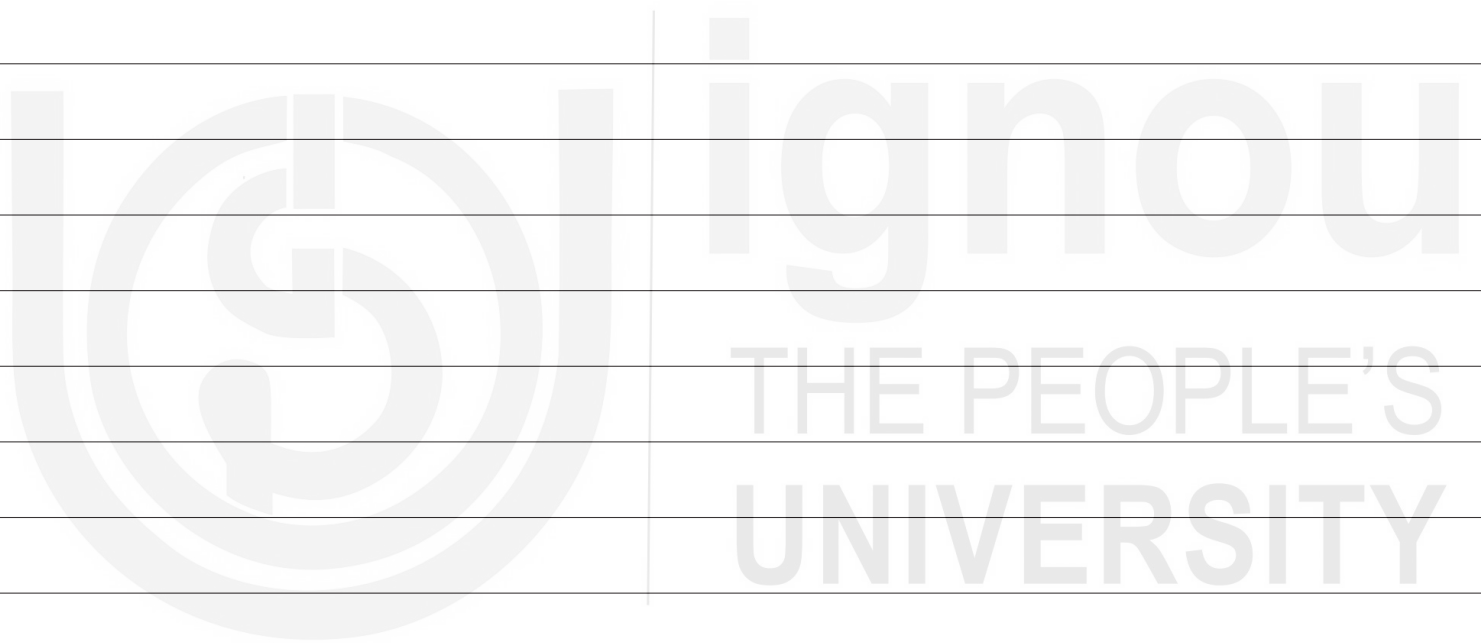
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Dr. P. Vijayakumar from School of Agriculture was the Trainer and Assessor for the training programme. Various aspects of Food Safety with special focus on Hygiene and Sanitary procedures to be followed by Food Business Operators were covered in the training programme. (ICSC) is one of the Food Safety Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) approved Training Partner.

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