

UGBS 105

Introduction to Public Administration

Session 11–Public Sector Corruption and Accountability

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Session 11

Public Sector Corruption and Accountability

Learning Objectives

→ At the end of the session, you should understand

- i. The concepts of corruption and accountability
- ii. The institutional mechanisms that can be used to check corruption in public administration
- iii. The conditions for ensuring effective principal-agent relations of public accountability
- iv. The challenges of holding public administrators accountable for the use of state authority and resources

The Challenge of Creating a Developmental Public Administration: Corruption and Accountability

○ “If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself” (James Madison, 1788)

→ Democratic societies face two key problems in creating an effective system of public administration that promote development:

(1) how to ensure that public administrators would have legitimate and effective final authority for regulating citizen behavior

(2) how to control public administrators from becoming corrupt and abusing the use of public authority and resources

The Challenge of Creating a Developmental Public Administration: Corruption and Accountability

- Human nature is corrupt and so there is the necessity for democratic societies to create what James Madison called “auxiliary precautions” in their constitutional frameworks of government to check the tendency for public administrators to misuse public resources
- What kind of institutional mechanisms would be most effective for checking corruption in public administration? The kind of institutional “auxiliary precautions” that could be created to check corruption will be discussed soon
- The table below shows that Ghanaians perceive that there is increasing levels of corruption among public administrators (and even private administrators) in diverse institutions

Institutions Perceived to be Affected by Corruption (Source: Ghana Integrity Initiative (GII) Survey)

○Percentage (%) of Ghanaians that perceive corruption in the following institutions, trends over time

Institutions perceived to be corrupt	2002	2005	2008	2012	2014	2002-2014
President and Officials in his Office	47%	56%	70%	87%	83%	+36%
Members of Parliament		59%	74%	90%	85%	+26%
Judges and Magistrates	70%	72%	79%	90%	85%	+15%
Officials of Electoral Commission					81%	--
Tax Officials of Ghana Revenue Authority		70%	79%	90%	85%	+15%
The Police	79%	81%	86%	94%	89%	+10%
National Government Officials		66%	77%	91%	86%	+20%
District Chief Executives				89%	84%	--
Local Government representatives		60%	71%	86%	83%	+23%
Business Executives	63%				82%	+19%
Religious leaders	41%				69%	+28%
Traditional leaders			68%		78%	+10%

What is Corruption?

- Everybody perceives that there is corruption in public institutions of administration, but it has not been easy to get agreement on what is meant by corruption
- The word corruption is from the Latin words corruptus meaning “spoiled” and corrumpere meaning “to ruin; to break into pieces” (United Nations 2004:23)
- From its Latin roots, the term Corruption may therefore be generally defined as a departure from rules, ideas or material objects intended to be the standard of action

Assessing the Effectiveness of Institutions Against Corruption

- ➔ Complete institutional effectiveness as lack of corruption: It can be said that an institution is completely effective if it is able to achieve its stated standards of values and objectives without any acts of corruption by its organizational members. If this is achieved then the institution is described as possessing institutional integrity
- Institutional integrity tests: In some countries like the USA, some institutions like the Police Service deliberately use realistic scenarios of potential corruption to subject its officials to institutional integrity tests as anti-corruption measures. Those who fail the tests are prosecuted and dismissed from the organization
- Institutional stasis: When an institution is assessed and found to be neither corrupt nor achieving its standards, then the institution is described as being in a state called institutional stasis. Institutional stasis may also occur where an institution maintains a balance between the attainment of its standards and corrupt behavior

What is Public Sector Corruption in Ghana?



- According to the Criminal Offenses Act of 1960 (Act 29), “A public officer commits the crime of corruption in respect of his or her office if the public officer directly or indirectly agrees or offers to permit to be influenced by any other person”

What Should Be Done To Deal With Corruption in Public Administration in Ghana?



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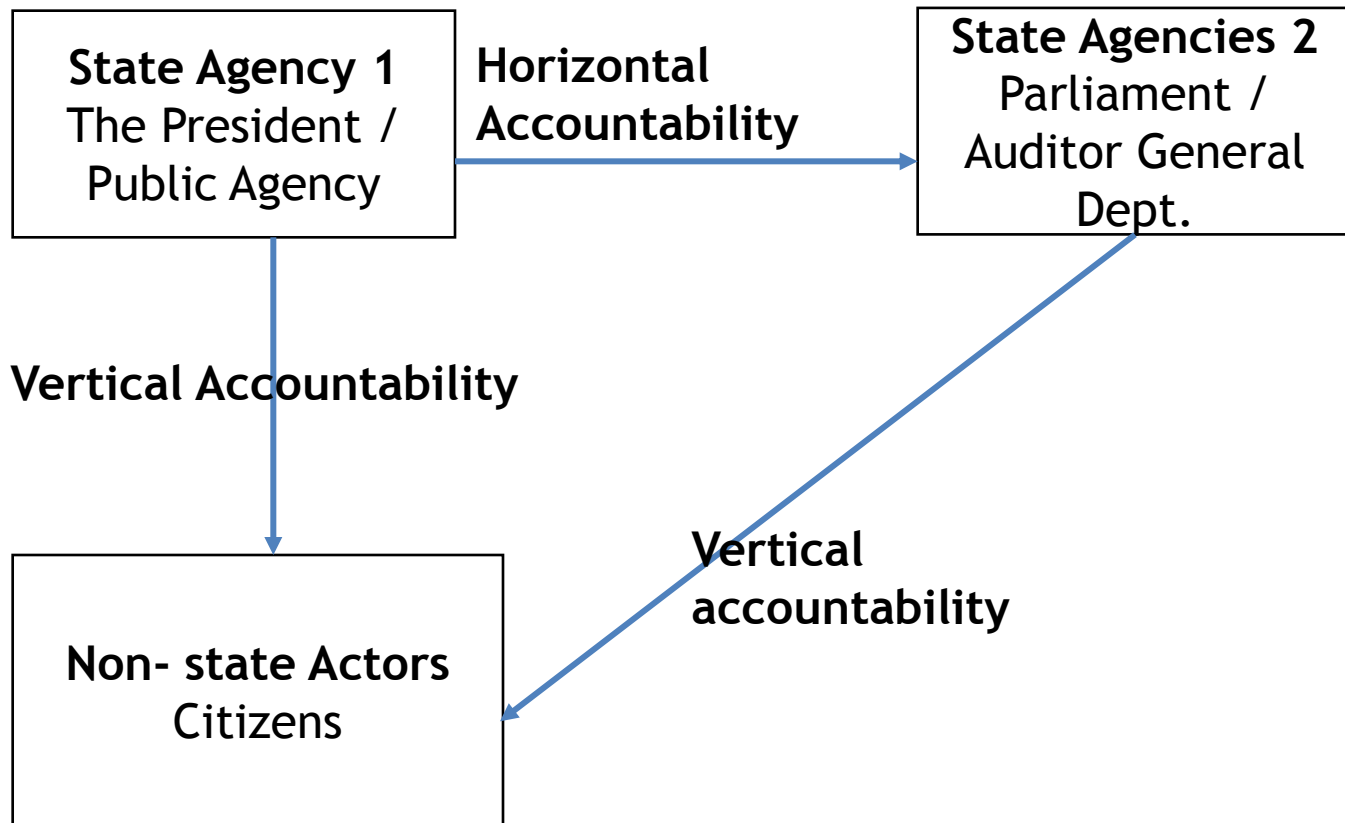
Checking Public Corruption through Mechanisms of Accountability

- Corruption in public administration can be checked, prevented and prosecuted through the creation of institutional rules of accountability
- Definition of Accountability: “Accountability is a relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor has an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conduct, the forum can pose questions and pass judgement, and the actor may face consequences” (Bovens, 2007:450)

Two Types of Institutions of Accountability

- According to Guillermo O'Donnell, there are two types of institutions of accountability that can be created to deal with corruption in public administration. The two types are, (i) vertical accountability and (ii) horizontal accountability
- i. Vertical Accountability: Vertical accountability is defined as relationships of accountability between a state agency and citizens or non-state actors in society. E.g. Between an elected President and Voters; between the Police Service and citizens
 - ii. Horizontal Accountability: Horizontal accountability refers to relationships of accountability between two or more state agencies. E.g. Between the Auditor-General and all public administrators; between the President and Parliament

Checking Corruption through Vertical and Horizontal Accountability



Source: Guillermo O'Donnell (1998)



Institutional Mechanism Trusted to Fight Public Sector Corruption in Ghana

→ In Ghana, the survey results below suggests that many citizens trust the use of horizontal mechanisms of accountability than vertical mechanisms of accountability to check corruption in public administration

Actors trusted to fight corruption	Respondents	Position
The Executive	498	1 st
Auditor-General and CHRAJ	332	2 nd
The Judiciary	279	3 rd
The Media	255	4 th
Parliament	193	5 th
Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs)	142	6 th
Individuals	111	7 th
International Organizations	62	8 th

Source: Adapted from Ghana Integrity Initiative Survey, 2011



Conditions for Effective Accountability

- First, there should be formal rules or institutions that defines the nature of the rights and responsibilities of public officials (principals) and citizens (agents)
- Second, appropriate bodies and citizens should have the relevant information necessary to hold their public officials (agent) accountable for the decisions and actions in the use of the public resources
- Third, citizens and other actors demanding accountability from agent public officials should have the necessary power to sanction public officials found to be corrupt and reward those officials who deliver mandated services



Conclusion: What is the Best Approach to Fight Corruption in Public Administration?

- Corruption is a situation where an actor or an institution or a material object departs from the expected standard
- Fighting corrupt public officials through institutions of vertical accountability depends on the power and resources of citizens to sanction or reward public officials
- Fighting corrupt public officials through institutions of horizontal accountability depends on the knowledge, power and resources of relevant state agencies to sanction or reward public officials
- Vertical and horizontal mechanisms of accountability are usually used to complement each other in the fight against corruption in public administration

