# INVESTIGATING THE IMPLICATIONS OF ACCOUNTABILITY ON THE EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION

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**-Abstract-**

Public sector and governments exist to improve the welfare of the citizens in ways that cannot often (or easily) be measured in terms of money (Schacter, 1999). A good government is the one that manages its measures and indicators in the right way in order to reach outcomes desired by the community (Schacter, 2002a).

When discussing public sector performance management, accountability should be the main topic of discussion as it is the core issue in public performance management in many of the developed and developing countries in the world (Islam, 2010; The Performance-Based Management Handbook, 2001).

This paper intends to investigate the implications of the public sector accountability via finding out the relation between it and the Egyptian Revolution that started on the 25th of January 2011.

**Key Words:** *Public Sector Performance Management, Accountability, Egypt*

**JEL Classification:** H110

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Inspired by the recent protests that led to the fall of the Tunisian government and the ousting of longtime Tunisian dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali (Draggan and Nathalie, 2011), Egyptians have joined other protesters across the Arab world in protesting their autocratic governments, high levels of corruption, and grinding poverty(Nick and Siddhartha, 2011). In Egypt, tens of thousands of protesters have taken to the streets on 25th of January 2011 and after 18 days of angry protests, the military decided to take the side of the protestors and insisted on the stepping down of the Egyptian President Mr. Mubarak who resigned on February 11th, ending 30 years of autocratic rule (Sarhan et. al., 2011; Solaiman et. al., 2011; The New York Times, 2011).

Accordingly, when facing a great public sector event as a revolution, accountability should be studied to stand on the imbalance in public sector performance management in a country that caused the revolution. Accountability is the core issue in public performance management in many of the developed and developing countries in the world (Islam, 2010; The Performance-Based Management Handbook, 2001).

This paper intends to investigate the relation between Uprising of the Egyptian Revolution that started on the 25th of January 2011and the implications of the public sector accountability on it and on the period proceeding the Egyptian Revolution (more than one year passed until now).

The next section is a brief literature on public sector accountability.

## 2. PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY

Bovens (2005a), states that public sector accountability is *"the hallmark of modern democratic governance."* It is the obligation of one party (the government) to explain and publicly justify its acts to another significant party (the citizens) (Islam, 2010).

Several authors (Shah and Schacter, 2004; Beckett and Jonker, 2002; Speers, 2004), suggest that increased demand for accountability will deliver a number of benefits. Furthermore it was investigated by several authors such as (Islam and El-Araby, 2007a; Schacter, 2001a; Graham, 1999; Diamond, 2002) that in order to face any corruption in governments; accountability can be divided into three institutions: a) Vertical Accountability, b) Horizontal Accountability, c) External Accountability

Sarhan et. al. (2011) and Islam (2010) agreed that what so called "failed accountability between government and citizens" defined by Schacter (2001b) as a kind of accountability is present in developing countries' governments who have little interest in reforming their governmental (public sector) existed in Egypt before the revolution. Accordingly, the next section shows the implications of accountability on the Egyptian Revolution Uprising.

## 3. PUBLIC SECTOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND EGYPTIAN REVOLUTION UPRISING

Based on accountability literature Islam, (2010) illustrated 16 activities which, if practiced in any government or public sector, will be theoretically accountable to its citizens. These activities are listed in Table 1:

### Table (1): Public Sector Performance Management Normative Practices

| Activities | Normative Practice |
|---|---|
| **Ensure Transparency** | Applying visible actions towards the public in order to show the benefits, limitations and disadvantages of a program that is initiated by the government. |
| **Legislate for transparency** | Agents of accountability organize public officials and government agencies to explain their decisions and, by appealing, through the media for public opinion, have public consent over their decisions. |
| **Audit for accountability** | Declaring the facts to the community, reports directly to the parliament in order to gain confidence and accountability to the public, keeps government guidelines on transparency and responsibility for budgets. |
| **Develop/support anti-corruption bodies in order to ensure transparency** | Investigate and report on complaints against public authorities. |
| **Manage Decisions** | Taking the right and effective decision depending upon the quantity and quality of information, the greater the quantity and quality of information the better the decision will be. |
| **Use educational programming to help in the decision- making process** | Programs may be developed by, or in close association with, institutions of higher education. |
| **Considering advocacy and nonprofits in the decision-making process** | Advocacies and non profits are taken into consideration when initiating a new public program or law through public participation or public feedback about the new program or law. This activity is in close relation with the activity of "Conducting research and dissemination in delivering information" |
| **Identifying each activity in the organisation and assigning its responsibilities** | Each action in the organisation has clear results showing clear responsibility. |
| **Conducting research and dissemination in delivering information** | Research and dissemination is conducted through the best channel that can deliver information to and from citizens ensuring effective citizen participation in the performance assessment process, and funding opportunities to stimulate interest and demand. |
| **Conducting transparent elections** | Conduct competitive and transparent elections through having judicial supervision over the elections. |
| **Ensuring honesty of public officials** | An effective rule of law is established which requires a comprehensive and logical legal code that is well documented and accessible to the public to ensure: <br> 1. Higher-level public officials announce their assets upon taking office. <br> 2. This should be announced every year thereafter and whenever their assets change in some significant, defined way. |
| **Ensuring Freedom of Information** | Citizens have the legal right to be able to access information of all activities and decisions of the government that do not abuse national security or violate individual rightsof privacy. |
| **The existence and effectiveness of the economic regulatory institutions** | Governments need central banks and regulation of the stock market that are independent of political control. |
| **Using one or more public sector performance measurement techniques** | Look after and report on the performance of public programs, through several performance measurement approaches and techniques. |
| **Studying the culture of the country** | Identify the best way for the public sector to gain accountability of its citizens, through understanding all historical events and cultural aspects that affect trust and satisfaction of citizens in a country. |
| **Ensuring Public Engagement** | Focus on results of outcomes and impacts rather than only outputs. This can be done through transparency on impacts and through using the feedback and learning loops, not only the feedback loop. |

Source: Islam (2010)

According to Table (1), Islam (2010) investigated the existence of these activates with both the Egyptian Officials and Egyptian Citizens which concluded in an existing gap between the two parties due to two main reasons which are:

- Lack of transparency
- Lack of public engagement in decision making

Those reasons had several impacts on the society as discussed by Islam (2010) and enhanced by other authors such as (Al Masry Al Youm, 2009; Central Auditing Organisation, 2009; Bradley, 2008; Fisk, 2009). These impacts are:

- Cultural Shock
- Centralised Management System
- Lack of Management by Example
- Lack of enriching youth by the feeling of their unimportance in society.
- Increasing Police authority

An important concept of accountability is how to deal with bad governmental performance and government corruption. The relationship between Egyptian citizens, Egyptian government and accountability before the Revolution is illustrated in the shaded part of Figure 1:

**Figure 1: Relation between Egyptian Citizens, Egyptian Government and Accountability**



Source: Islam, 2010
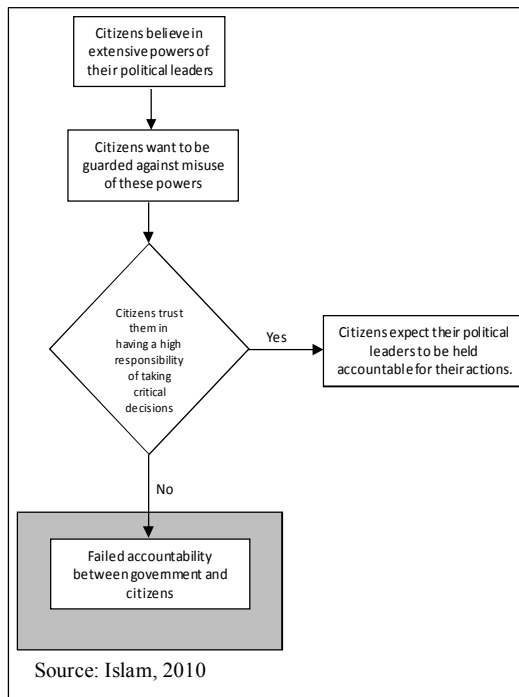
In general, the relation between citizens, government and accountability helps to understand the citizens' expectations of its government, this helps the government to correct its performance and manage it differently. It helps also in predicting the future of a government.

According to Figure 1 the Egyptian Government was mal functioning before the revolution and that the Egyptian government was not held accountable by Egyptian citizens.

This result revealed a need for more investigation about the performance management system that led to a failed accountability in the Egyptian Government before the Revolution as shown in Figure 1.

Islam and El-Araby (2007a) defined a framework through which the level of governance in a country can be specified as shown in Figure 2. This framework helps in controlling corruption in governments.

**Figure 2: The Environment that Indicates Level of Governance within a Country**



Islam and El-Araby (2007a)
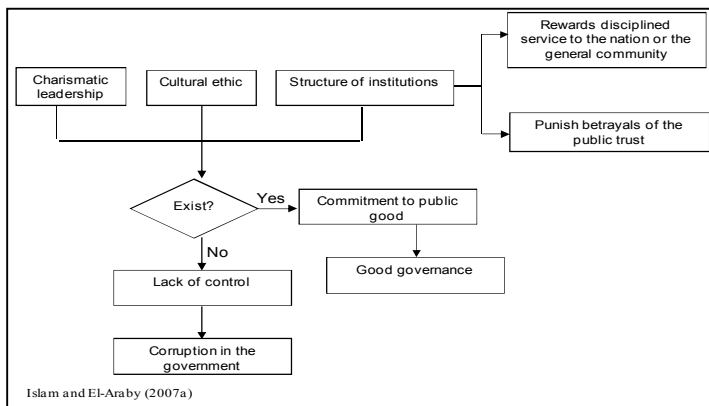
According to investigation made by Islam (2010) and in comparison to activities in Table 1, a large gap was found between the official governmental opinion in Egypt about its performance management on one hand and the Egyptian Citizens' opinion about the same issue on the other hand. This gap was founded because of *lack of transparency and lack of public engagement in decision making*.

Consequently, there was a lack in the first component in Figure 2 *"Charismatic Leadership"*. Islam (2010) point of view is supported by several authors (Fadel, 2011; Paciello, 2011; Bradley, 2008; Farouk, 2008; Fisk, 2009; Washington Post, 2005) who agreed about the lack of charismatic leadership due to **unethical behavior** made by the former Egyptian Government. This resulted in a lack of the second element illustrated in Figure (2); *"Cultural Ethic"*.

The non existence of the first two elements in Figure (2) in the former Egyptian Government showed a logical consequent that appeared as a lack in the third element *"Structure of Institutions"*.

This lack is a result as unethical behavior shows an imbalance in the whole governmental performance management system. The absence of the third element and the corruption of government can be clearly shown in the elements that caused the gap between Egyptian Officials and Egyptian Citizens as mentioned previously.

From the previous discussion the author concludes that the non existence of the three elements: *"Charismatic Leadership"*, *"Cultural Ethic"*, *"Structure of Institutions"* means that there was no control in the government and that there was a corruption that should have been dealt with in order to recover public sector accountability and maintain stability in the Egyptian society.

This section can therefore conclude that the former governmental sector in Egypt had problems in the public sector accountability as it did not take these problems into consideration.

## 4.  CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Accordingly, the author concludes from the previous discussion that the lack of accountability was a major reason in the uprising of the Egyptian revolution on the 25th of January 2011.

Consequently, it is recommended that the new Egyptian Government should take the public sector accountability into consideration as a core component of the public sector and governmental performance management system to maintain a high transparency level and a high public engagement level with the citizens and to take into considerations different impacts of the lack of accountability that led to the Revolution Uprising as shown in Section 3.

The Egyptian Governmental situation from the accountability perspective before the Revolution can also be taken into consideration by other Arab countries having problems with their citizens as Arab Countries share similar cultural aspects that formed what is called the "Arab Identity" (Hofstede, 2003; Macleod and Baxter, 2001; Anjard, 1998; Heggy, 1998a; Heggy, 1998b; Stables, 2006; Islam and Labib, 2007; Islam and El-Araby, 2007b). Barakat (2003) summarized these aspects as: (a) the overall manner of living (social traditions, perceptions of different issues in social and political events, values, beliefs, customs, norms, traditions and skills) (b) shared history of science, knowledge or thought.

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