

## **Accountability as a basis to better performance in the police**

Bashir Ghanim

Passport No.: 11495191

### **Abstract**

The unsatisfying achievements of the law authorities increase the criticism by the last years. The criticism did not passed the police in Israel and it required to explain day and night why the citizen feels less personal security, deals with increasing crime rates and feel helplessness towards the fight against car accidents - in spite of the huge resources the state invests in the police.

The chance to improve the police achievements are mostly depends on its people to take professional accountability and the ability to relate to their accountability. Accountability is defined as being responsible, reliable in front of higher levels in the organizational or bureaucratic management chain and the environment the duty holder work in (Schillemans, 2010). Although the required change is cultural change, the police, as part of public administration, are an organization characterized by structure conditions and action circumstances that make it more difficult to make and allow those who want to avoid responsibility to do so. This article will review the importance of accountability as a basis of improving the police performance.

**Key words:** accountability, transparency, performance, public sector, police

### **Background:**

Since the 1990<sup>th</sup> there is more attendance in the term accountability in the professional literature and in daily discussion. The increasing interest in human rights and democracy in the world rooted the term in electorate that wand more than ever accountability (Burgess, 1982, Mulgan, 2003, Bovens, 2007), however, accountability is not restricted to democratic governments, although in democracies a higher demand for accountability is heard. Each authorized agency is usually required to justify its actions to higher authority (Robertson, 2004). At the last decade, the demand to accountability is heard everywhere: in privet life, in public life, and especially in all kind of organizations, that constantly try to improve their performance and the service their customers get.

The term accountability is a core value in public administration in spite of the differences about its interpretation. Those differences are hidden under the cover of consensus about the importance and necessity of this term. Some researches refer to the term of accountability in context of transparency, accountability and

the ability to respond while pointing an accusing finger to the cause of failure (Conner, Smith & Hickman, 1994).

In the academic literature there are many definitions to the accountability term, however there are some approaches that unite those different definitions that may be found. One approach interprets the term as responsibility to performance (Dubick, 2005) and responsibility to actions and decisions (Ranft, Ferris & Perryman, 2007). In the last decade we see that the trend among researchers and the public moves toward agreement of the term accountability. In some definitions of the term accountability in literature you may find distinction between the term accountability and accountable, yet many researchers introduce the terms together in the interpretation of each one of the terms.

The term accountability does not have a satisfactory interpretation yet for its operative meaning in the public sector. Usually accountability is linked as a term of principal that relates the situation in which something gets wrong, when someone tries to determine a cause or point an accusing finger on the failure cause (Conners et al. 1994). Accountability is defined as the individual's awareness to the responsibility he might have, judging decision making process and / or the performance of his decisions (Tetlock, 1985) accountability is perceived also as the responsibility given to transfer between middle echelon to junior echelon (De Haven-Smith & Jenne, 2006). According to other researchers accountability involves answerability to higher levels in the organizational or bureaucratic management chain and the environment the duty holder work in. In addition, Cornet, Eining & Jen-Hwa Hu (2011) claim that accountability is perceived, expressed or implied, in terms of reward and punishment. Accountability may be created from viewing performance, results of decisions courses of action or from the process and thinking brought to getting the decision. Nowadays, legal precedents, statutory decisions, regulations and procedures, fix formally external mechanisms to ensure responsible behavior of managers in public service (Bertelli, 2004). Accountability in its purpose is the duty of public organizations to serve higher authority – the public's trust – that is the source of authority of those organizations. Standards of accountability may be found in the laws file.

These are standards that expressed in clear expectations the public has of the duty holder. These expectations are indirectly expressed in implied criticism of tax payers, customers, money downers, media and other persons of interest. The term accountability may be defined as people's obligation to report actions and answer questions within the responsibility of their duty to the people responsible for the organization (Ylimaki & McClain, 2009). Dubnick (2005) as before him notes that the term accountability has two main integral components: (1) Responsibility (2) Answerability – to each question asked by superiors or people of interest. Romzek & Ingraham (2000) claims similarly, that accountability in

its basic meaning refers to the ability to respond to any factor about expected performance. Roberts (2002) presents five aspects of accountability in public organization (1) Transparency (2) Liability and Reliability (3) Controllability (4) responsibility (5) Responsiveness.

The definition of accountability used in many researches is the definition suggested by Wood & Winston (2007) that discern between three dimensions: (1) the dimension of responsibility (2) the dimension of openness (3) the dimension of answerability. Likewise Erkkila (2007) sees in the component of openness that embedded in the deciding processes and in determining public policy a significant and integral part of the term accountability.

Accountability is necessarily involves meeting the standards and end parties. Key components in the definition are: reporting of performance, justification, reporting side and an audience that receive the report, transparency, feedback, rewards and sanctions. These definitions even imply about existence of agreed goals or standards that performance and results are measured by. A main subject in the accountability term in individual level is its context to performance in work and results. The accountability term is embodied in evaluating the performance and feedback on performance it is a mechanism in which the audience transmit his reaction to the reporting side. The employees' tendency to accountability means the willing to meet the expectations, strong feelings of accountability and usually also significant influence on a specific individual in the organization. Employees that feel accountability will be aware to the required means to optimal performance of their work, their working methods and their results will be, relatively, seen and transparent and they will be appreciated and expect it (Rosenblat, 2006).

Some researchers (Dubnic, 2005; Eun & Wook, 2010) referred the four areas of accountability: (1) Hierarchic / bureaucratic accountability – points on tight supervision of the supervisors through use of laws and regulations, instruction while supervising and constant standards to measure performance. (2) Legal accountability – reflects an outside look comprehensive and detailed about performance directed to preserve the contract relations in the organization. (3) Professional accountability – the expectation from employees in the organization to work based on their expertise, and required professional norms and standards. (4) Political accountability – refers to the organization's responsiveness to its main people of interest, i.e. clients, government and community.

The common to the definitions of the term accountability are the basic assumptions: 1. There are factors that expect the duty holder to a specific action. 2. His supervising factors or the public expect him to take responsibility in the areas of his responsibility. 3. There is a way in which the factors know the duty

is performed, through official report or in other professional or personal way (Isaaki & Friedman, 2004), meaning, an obligatory report – to supply information or explanation about their actions to other people about the method of performing the duty.

### **Accountability in Israeli Police and the connection to performance**

The perception of the Israeli police by the Israeli public is mixed. Although one of the common motives in public dialog is that the Israeli police is improving and seeks for change, it is clear that the dissatisfaction of the police performance is still very common in all parts of Israeli society. Sometimes police officers are described as incompetent and unfair and the quality of police officers is perceived as uneven. Although most of Israeli citizens do not have any contact with police officers, their attitudes have great influence on the police's performance: when the common perception is that the police suffers of many disadvantages and that the police officers are weak, this attitudes may harm the cooperation with the community, which is essential to the police's success. However, when the public has faith in the police, a good circle is created: good policing and good results help to build public support that contributes to improve policing. This article suggests that improved policing is first of all depends on the rate police officers' accountability. RAND report, which was made in 2014 and checked the Israeli police, showed an efficient policing model based on procedural justice. The basis of this model is that the Israeli police needs more effective strategy to develop and nurture the public support. Model of procedural justice is the key to increase public support at the Israeli police. The model that shows procedural justice is neither a program nor an intervention. It is a policing model based of transparency of the criminal justice system and fairness. There are many types of procedural justice in policing, and three foundations are common to all: the police needs the public support and its cooperation; support and cooperation are derived from the police's perceived legitimacy and legitimacy is derived from the police's rate of accountability transparency (Tyler, 2004).

When people believe they have got fair treatment from police officers, because the police officer's procedures and decisions are explained in a respectful way, and when and they believe their issue was heard, it is more reasonable that they will appreciate meeting with the police as positive, even if the results of the meeting are not good for them. In a more general way: when the public understands the police procedures and processes he believes it is fair and believes the police is "taking responsibility" of its actions and performance, the police gets larger public support.

## Summary

Behaving according to accountability standards requires assimilating organizational culture the directly influences the work groups and the organizational climate. Cooper (1990) claims that active components of each organizational strategy should include, indirectly or directly, standards of accountability. Therefore, increases the importance of the accountability weight as a basic factor of leadership definition and as a factor that potentially influence the behavior of the public sector employees in general and police officers in particular. An attitude of "procedural justice" to policing includes application of transparency principals in police action and accountability for outputs and results may help the Israeli police in its efforts to formulate new strategies to respond existing and developing challenges it faces. This article suggests improving the police performance through focusing in reinforcing accountability. Police's accountability will lead to better performance. The assumption is that when the public will feel that the goal takes responsibility it will express higher satisfaction and will cooperate with the police to prevent / report crimes. All these will lead to better police performance.

## Bibliography

1. Bertelli, A. M. *Strategy and Accountability: Structural Reform Litigation and Public Management*. Public Administration Review. 64. (1).2004. Pp. 28-42.
2. Bovens, M. *New Forms of Accountability and EU-Governance*. Comparative European Politics. 4, 2007. Pp 104-120.
3. Burgess, T. *Accountability with confidence*. In: T. Burgess (Ed), *Accountability in school*. UK: Longman Group.1992
4. Cooper, T.. *The responsible administrator: an approach to ethics for the administrative role*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers. 1990
5. Conners, R., Smith, T. & Hickman, C. *The Oz Principle: Getting Results Through Individual and Organizational Accountability*. Prentice Hall, NJ.1994
6. Cornell, R. M., Eining, M. M., Jen-Hwa Hu, P. *The Effects of Process Accountability on Individuals' Use of a Familiar Technology*. Journal of Information Systems. 25. (1). 2011. Pp. 109-128.
7. De Haven-Smith, L. & Jenne, K. C., II. *Management by Inquiry: A Discursive Accountability System for Large Organizations* Full Text Available. Public Administration Review. (66). (1).2006. pp. 64-76.
8. Dubnick, M. *Accountability and the Promise of Performance: In Search of the Mechanisms*. Public Performance and Management Review. 28. (3).2005. pp. 376-417.

9. Eun Kim, S., & Wook Lee, J. *Impact of Competing Accountability Requirements on Perceived Work Performance*. *The American Review of Public Administration*. Vol 40, 2010, pp. 100-118.
10. Kearns, K. *Managing for Accountability: preserving the public trust in public and nonprofit organizations*. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass Publishers. 1996
11. Mulgan, R. *Holding Power to Account: Accountability in Modern Democracies*, Palgrave,
12. Rand Report. *Effective Policing for 21st-Century Israel* . RAND corporation. 2014
13. Ranft, A. L., Ferris, G. R & Perryman, A. A. *Dealing with celebrity and accountability in the top job*. *Human Resource Management*, 4, 2007 pp 671-682.
14. Roberts, N. C. *Keeping Public Officials Accountable through Dialogue: Resolving the Accountability Paradox*. *Public Administration Review*. 62. (6). 2002. pp. 658-669.
15. Robertson, D. A . *Dictionary of Modern Politics*. Third Edition, Europa Publications, Taylor & Francis Group, 3. 2004
16. Romzek, B.S. & Ingraham, P. W. *Cross Pressures of Accountability: Initiative, Command, and Failure in the Ron Brown Plane Crash*. *Public Administration Review*. 60. (3). 2000. pp. 240-253.
17. Schillemans, T. *Redundant Accountability: The Joint Impact of Horizontal and Vertical Accountability on Autonomous Agencies*. *Public Administration Quarterly*. 34. (3). 2010. pp. 300-337.
18. Tetlock, P. E. *Accountability: The neglected social context of judgment and choice*. *Research in Organizational Behavior*. 7. 1985. pp. 297-332.
19. Tyler, Tom R., *Enhancing Police Legitimacy* , *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 593, 2004, pp. 84–99.
20. Wood, J. A. & Winston, B. E. *Development of Three Scales to Measure Leader Accountability*. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*. 28. (2) 2007. pp. 167–185.
21. Yitzhaki, R. & Friedman, Y. *Teacher accountability is perceived: in a multi-dimensional concept*. *Studies in Educational Administration and Evaluation*, Vol 28, 2004 , pp. 161 193.
22. Ylimaki, R. M. & McClain, L. J. *Wisdom-Centred Educational Leadership*. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*. 12. (1). 2009. pp.13-33.