

The Raffles Review

Issue 23. 16 October 2015

Trust and the SDGs



SOURCE

[The Global Competitiveness Report 2014-15](#) published by the World Economic Forum (WEF) on 3 September 2015, and [The Quality Of Government Institute: Report for the first ten years of a Research Programme at University of Gothenburg](#) by Bo Rothstein, published in August 2015.

BIG IDEAS

- The causes of competitiveness of the 144 countries surveyed derive from many drivers of productivity and prosperity, but all depend on public service as the key to building citizens' trust in their governments.
- The top-10 ranked globally competitive countries are all high-income countries: Switzerland, Singapore, USA, Finland, Germany, Japan, Hong Kong SAR, The Netherlands, UK and Sweden.
- Of these, Singapore, Finland and Switzerland also rank in the top-10 for ethics and lacking corruption, as well as for public sector performance.
- Under 'ethics and corruption' a key finding of the WEF report was on 'public trust in politicians'. Most of the countries that ranked high as globally competitive were also the ones with highest trust in their politicians (Singapore, Qatar, UAE, Norway and Finland ranked as the top 5 in this).
- Though classified as a low-income country, Rwanda remarkably ranked 7th in public sector performance, 8th in transparency of government policymaking, 10th highest trust in politicians and 16th in terms of overall effectiveness of public institutions.
- Italy, which ranked 49th overall for global competitiveness, ranked 143rd (among 144 countries) for public sector performance and 139th for trust in its politicians.
- Other low-ranked countries included Chad, Angola, Venezuela and Guinea all scoring very low on ethics and corruption as well as on public sector performance. Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Venezuela and Lebanon were ranked as having the lowest levels of trust in its politicians.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

- As morale and intrinsic motivation in the public sector have been declining in many parts of the world, public trust in government has also been steadily eroding.
- Research shows that an impartial and effective public administration builds the trust between the state and citizenry that is essential for development. Trust in government leading to state legitimacy is not principally created by democracy, the rule of law, or efficiency and effectiveness. Instead, trust is the outcome of the impartiality of institutions that exercise government authority fairly.
 - That impartiality arises from, and reinforces, a public service ethos that motivates officials to deliver public services in accordance with a commitment to serving the public interest.
 - Impartiality of government institutions is linked to higher levels of well-being and promoting interpersonal trust and economic growth. Corruption on the other hand systematically breaches impartiality and so lowers trust in government institutions.
- As the successful delivery of the UN Sustainable Development Goals depends on an empowered, effective and efficient public service that is trusted by the public it serves, which countries are likely to have achieved most progress by 2030?

The Raffles Review
aims to ruffle your thinking!

*This weekly offering
summarises insights on public
service matters to challenge
assumptions and question
the status quo.*