

The Opportunities and Challenges of Good Governance in Tigray National Regional State: The Case of Mekelle City

Gosa Setu Tafese

Assistant Professor, Department of Civics and Ethical Studies, College of Social Sciences and Humanities, Arsi University, Ethiopia

Abstract

Good governance has the critical aim of promoting equity, increasing the quality of public service and economic growth. In this paper the scope of good governance are limited to basic elements of good governance like rule of law, participation, accountability, transparency, efficiency, responsiveness and effectiveness to assess the opportunities and challenges of good governance in court, finance and economic development and land administration offices in Tigray National Regional State specifically in Mekelle city administration. However, the opportunities and challenges of good governance in the identified areas still lack investigation. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the opportunities and challenges of good governance in Tigray National Regional State specifically in Mekelle city administration. The data collected via desk reviews, key informants and personal observation were critically analyzed. Consequently, the country's constitution clearly indicates that functions of government at all levels shall be transparent and officials shall be accountable to the people unless officials shall be questioned. Further, the government is addressing the issues of good governance in its policies and plans. However, the collective action problems are occurred at multiple levels. Courts are also not fully equipped with the necessary number of skilled manpower at the some sub-cities are undermining good governance that effectively generate healthy services in the city. The communities in the city are also not fully informed what the city administration has been planned. Civil service reform program problems and corruption are also impeding the implementation of good governance. Service delivery on stated time and providing decision based on realistic evidence are hardly practiced in city. Lack of responsiveness, transparency, low interaction between stakeholders, lack of commitment and motivation of leaders and experts in city to facilitate the implementation of good governance are identified as the most impediments to good governance.

Keywords: Opportunities, Challenges, Good Governance

I. Introduction

Good governance has the potential to increase the quality of public service with the ultimate aim of increasing economic growth. Different writers and institutions define the concept of good governance. For instance, the World Bank defines good governance as 'the extent to which a country's citizens are able to participate in selecting their government, as well as freedom of expression, freedom of association, and a free media' (Vries, 2013). This implies that having good governance in given state is part and parcel of democratic rights of the citizen. However, lack of good governance is leading numerous problems that are; the political, economic and social problems that affect the quality of life of the nation. It is also the major impediments of development in given state.

To tackle the aforementioned problems Ethiopia has been introduced good governance packages and involved core dimensions of good governance in its different laws and the 1995 FDRE constitution. This implies that there are an opportunities for good governance. This also needs critical assessment. Despite these opportunities, there are large gaps between good governance packages and actions on the ground; therefore, from this one can argue that there are challenges to the implementation of good governance packages though these challenges have not been studied well. Consequently, the opportunities for good governance and challenges to good governance are need far investigation. Besides, there is a need for rigorous awareness raising efforts about good governance. Through filling the explained gaps, this study provides adequate knowledge sharing. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the opportunities and challenges of good governance in Tigray National Regional State specifically in Mekelle city administration. Following this introduction, the second section examines materials and methods of data collection while the third section briefly analysis the results and discussion of the study. The fourth section of this article deals with conclusion and recommendation.

II. Materials and Methods

This article employed qualitative research approach to investigate the opportunities and challenges of good governance in Tigray National Regional State specifically in Mekelle city administration. This is due to the fact that qualitative research is a type of scientific research that needed due to the topic has never been addressed with a certain sample or group of people under the study (as Morse, 1991 cited in Creswell).

In terms of tools of data collection, this study based on primary and secondary sources. Primary data was collected via semi-structured interview and personal observation. Key informants are purposively selected to

conduct deep interviews with the heads and senior experts of court, finance and economic development and land administration offices in Mekelle city administration. The customers have been continuously observed by the researcher in each office involved in the study as key informants as well. In addition to this, desk reviews; reviews of secondary sources such as journal articles, media, official documents and reports were employed. The data collected from key informants, personal observation and secondary sources critically analyzed and described as follows. This article is delimited to the basic elements of good governance consist of rule of law, participation, accountability, transparency, efficiency, responsiveness and effectiveness to assess the opportunities and challenges of good governance in court, finance and economic development sector and land administration office in Tigray National Regional State specifically in Mekelle city administration.

III. Results and Discussion

Good governance is the primarily tools of fighting against poverty. This mainly implies that the dominance of accountability and transparency in government duties and roles, serving the public per the rule of law, responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency in service delivery. In addition to an opportunities for good governance but there are also challenges to it. Thus, opportunities and challenges of good governance in the court, finance and land administration offices are critically discussed under this section.

Opportunities of Good Governance

Ethiopia has introduced legal framework governing its budget, justice and land administration systems that derives from the 1995 FDRE Constitution. Policies and strategies have been originated to promote good governance in the city in particular and in the country in general. In this regard the government of Ethiopia displayed a strong political commitment to consolidate good governance in the country. This political commitment clearly articulated in the Growth and Transformation Plan two (GTP II). The country has also taken significant measures to make public administration, legislative system and fiscal authorities work effectively and in a transparent manner (MFED, 2010). These include the important role of the House of Peoples' Representatives and state councils in ratifying and supervising all implementations of laws and administrative affairs. There are also over ten laws, proclamations and regulations for effective and transparent public financial management (ibid). The legal frame work has made a provision for the legislature to maintain an oversight over the executive in the budget process (Elizabeth, 2005).

Moreover, Tigray Regional State has effective operational procedures for internal and external audits. In this regard, the Office of the Auditor General has a well organized structure. Besides, the anti-corruption battle and the formulation of anti-corruption policy have been spearheaded by the Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission established by the proclamation in 2001 to institutionalize the fight against corruption (MFED, 2010). This implies that Ethiopian government is following a zero tolerance policy towards corruption and rent-seeking attitudes and actions. In addition to the above mentioned opportunities, there are also another opportunities for good governance as discussed below.

The Constitution of the Country

The 1995 FDRE constitution clearly indicates that 'rule of law will be respected and functions of government at all levels shall be transparent and officials shall be accountable to the people. If these are not fulfilled by elected representatives or officials they shall be questioned and proper action will be taken' (1995 FDRE Constitution). In various provisions of the 1995 FDRE constitution good governance has got an attention. For example, in Article 12, which recognizes and stresses the 'conduct and accountability of government; the conduct of government shall be transparent. Any public official or an elected representative is accountable for any failure in official duties. In case of loss of confidence, the people may recall an elected representative' (ibid). Article 55/15 also ordered the House of peoples' representative to establish the institution of the Ombudsman, and select and appoint its members so as to promote good governance. This is due to the fact that good governance ensures political, social and economic issues that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation of resources and to improve democratic governance as well. The establishment of democratic institutions like Human Rights Commission and Office of the Ombudsman would help to bolster the ground work for instituting good governance in Ethiopia in general and Mekelle city in particular.

Government Launches Good Governance Movement

Good governance has become a foremost area of attention by the country due to the fact that foreign direct investment and private economic sector have generated the demand for good governance in the country. Consequently, the Ethiopian government has given the leading attention for good governance. In this regard, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn said that his government is ready to further strengthen the effort being exerted to solve the lack of good governance (EBC, 2015). On opening the forum for launching good governance movement he said that the rapid growth of the country cannot be sustained unless the existence of a

strong involvement of the public, private and civic society in solving the problems of lack of good governance should be required. He also added that development, democracy and good governance cannot be separated; more efforts need to be exerted at all levels to sustain the development activities and solve lack of good governance (ibid).

Prime Minister Hailemariam argues that emphasis should be given to the fight against rent seeking and lack of good governance by identifying and solving the root causes. He also called the whole public to contribute their share in the drive to tackle bad governance and rent seeking at all levels (ibid). As a result the numbers of options have been forwarded to tackle bad governance at all levels. For instance, different bureaus and sectors have taken the mandate to establish governance and complaint hearing committee who is mandated to give solutions after receiving complaints from the residents. This is also another encouraging environment to fight against corruption in the country at large.

Challenges of Good Governance

Challenges of good governance in the identified areas have been identified. These challenges are discussed as follows.

Lack of Necessary Number of Skilled, Committed and Motivated Man power

It is clear that the existence of accurately set rule of law is a backbone to effective functioning of good governance in country. The rule of law and good governance could only be effective if and only if independent and effective Judiciary system along with skilled manpower; law makers, judges and police forces are put in place (Meskerem, 2007). In this regard in Mekelle city administration there are courts though not fully equipped with sufficient number of skilled manpower to serve the community to the required service delivery quality. Even at some sub-city the judges come to the social courts once a week. One of the known realities is that judges don't have proper training. Besides, due to the shortage of the required and skilled manpower in the judiciary system, there is dependency on each other, for instance, kebele court is looking for the help of the sub-city's court for different issues. This implies that incapacitated human power has been observed in some offices. This hinders them from carrying out their responsibilities fully and has its own negative impact on efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. Moreover, delivering a timely service and providing decision based on reasonable evidence has rarely been practiced in some courts of the city.

Committed and motivated leadership and good governance are the two sides of the same coin. The two have many rudiment elements in common. Without committed and motivated leadership it is difficult to ensure and promote good governance. For instance, motivation, ethics, competence and publicity are among the fundamental qualities of effective leadership. A leader without having motivation, ethics, competence and publicity may not be effective and efficient in leading any offices. He/she may not be effective and efficient in fulfilling his/her responsibility which results in exploitation of public resources. An important point we need to take into account is that the leader should be transparent and accountable. As to the key informants the problems of commitment and motivation, efficiency and effectiveness of some leaders and experts observed in all sub-cities of the Mekelle city administration. In addition to problems with service delivery, lack of commitment and motivation of leaders and experts in city to facilitate the implementation of good governance are acknowledged as the most obstruction to good governance.

Low Participation of the Communities

The communities in the Mekelle city administration have the right to participate in every step of developments starting from planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of projects. However, the veracity on the ground shows that the communities at the most sub-cities are not fully informed what their administration has been planned. Sometimes simply they ask the people to contribute in terms of labor or cash to execute the approved plan without their involvement (Gebreslassie, 2012). Due to this situation, some of the communities were not ready to participate in meetings and sometimes people might not attend the meetings because of the government will not consider their opinions and the non-responsiveness of some representatives for most issues (ibid).

The regularity of decisions based on rule of law and community participation in their affairs are important factors for the legitimacy of the decisions and for the assurance of good governance. Good governance is characterized by responsiveness and fair decisions by accommodating various competing public interests and focuses on the best interest and needs of citizens. Timeliness, effectiveness and efficiency in the decision making process add special value to the prevalence of good governance and making decisions on a participatory manner as the linchpins of good governance (ibid). Participation can be possible if the leader is open to the public. It is productive if and only if the head is ready to be transparent and accountable to share new ideas. Otherwise, if the community is deprived of the right to access of information it results in loss of public trust; and this in turn results in public grievance and social disturbance.

Participation in a budget process is not a luxury; it is rather a basic right of all citizens (Birhanu, 2011).

It allows members of the community to rise what is important for them and, hence, influence budget allocations. It also allows different layers of government to know the most and unmet demands of the community. By doing so, the government and the community can mobilize resources, provide more equitable distribution of budgetary allocations (without discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, region, rural/urban, vulnerable groups) and effectively spend the resources. Thus, participation is an essential ingredient in the budget process to ensure efficient provision and more equitable distribution of budgetary allocations (Ibid). In most sub-city of Mekelle city administration, participation in a budget process, execution and allocation were not sound. This implies that a lack of access to comprehensive budget information in the city and/sub-cities, which was an indicator of bad governance.

Collective Action Problems at Multiple Levels

Collective actions problems arise at multiple levels at the some sub-cities are undermining good governance efforts in the city. It is contributing to prevent individual actors from coordinating and working together productively to generate services. In this regard, Minister of Justice, Getachew Ambaye, said lack of strong crime investigation and improper criminal investigation, lack of joint efforts between prosecutors and police as well as intermediaries are some of the problems that exposed the justice system to corruption (EBC, 2015). It should be understood that the government is not the only imperative organ that improves good governance system because it cannot be attained only through the efforts made by the regional and/ federal government. Civil society organizations, the entire public, institutes of higher learning, the private sectors, and religious organizations should be able to find their niche in contributing to the enhancement of good governance in Ethiopia in general and in the city in particular.

Key informants argue that good governance problems in the city originated from the involvement of the heads themselves in rent seeking activities. In other cases, forums and conferences in which individuals and different types of actors might come together to identify collective problems, goals and define responsibilities have been undermined in the city. Thus, different stake holders include government officials, religious leaders, elders and civic societies should take part in the discussion to get rid of the prevalent lack of good governance.

Lack of Culture of Strong Accountability, Transparency and Responsiveness

Transparency, accountability and responsiveness are the core principles of good governance. Transparency can be important decision making to be open and clear for stake holders and it encourages stake holder's involvement in decision making (Gebreslassie, 2012). In this regard key informants argue that lack of competence and insufficient and unqualified judges, uncommitted and unqualified, unethical leaders and officers/experts caused low level of transparency, accountability and responsiveness in the city. Besides, there were insufficient number of qualified public prosecutors, inefficient methods and procedures of the justice delivery system and lack of access to justice information (Vibhute, 2009). In this regard Mekelle city has also its own share. Key informants were asked to provide their suggestion concerning the transparency of actions and decision of the social court, issues related to land administration and finance offices in their respective sub-city. They responded that most of their decisions and actions were never transparent. This implies that transparency and responsiveness had discredited in the court, land administration and finance offices of the city, which are the most significant indicators of good governance.

In most sub-cities of Mekelle city, there is no open discussion on issues that are affecting the communities. From this it is possible to argue that lack of transparency and accountability prohibits the peoples from demanding their rights and working on activities that they are accountable for. Besides, an interview with the key informants regarding corruption in the social court indicates that corruption is high in social court. In this regard they argue that social court judges are not paid and thus, they attain their income via corruption. It is difficult to argue that there were no rent seeking and/ corruption in the finance and economic development and land administration offices. The gap of knowledge also identified as one of the challenges to good governance. Social courts do not permit the right of appeal when their customers request appeal to the higher court because of lack of knowledge and confidence. Some of the higher courts in the city also take time in solving the complaints. Even they ask grand corruption while social court judges committed a petty corruption. But this does not mean social court judges do not commit grand corruption (Gebreslassie, 2012).

Responsiveness is also important component of good governance. As a principle it advocates public feed backs and complaints to be addressed within a given time and cost. It is not the only timely response to the complaints and feed backs but also the importance of these decisions in satisfying the public demands and interests should also taken into account. Key informants were asked concerning the service delivery of their respective courts, finance and economic development and land administration offices so as to put their satisfaction level. In this regard they assured their level of satisfaction as low with their reasons. Most of them argue that there was lack of speed response in the offices of their respective sub-city. They added that the efforts that many youngsters had been done to form cooperatives so as to alleviate their poverty are discouraged due to

lack of culture of strong accountability, transparency and responsiveness in their respective sub-cities and offices. The customers from the court, finance and economic development and land administration offices had asked about the timely response of the offices to their problems. They responded that their and public complaints on land, delay of justice and procurement problems never solved within a given time frame. This clearly indicated that there were problems about responsiveness of the offices to the public problems.

Civil Service Reform Problems

The civil service reform provides a special opportunity to address the ethical problems of the public servants (ECA/PHSD/PA, 1996). Further, the anti-corruption programme is improving ethical conduct of civil servants, promoting citizens' charter and enhancing responsiveness of civil servants to public needs, which could become the key player for the campaign for good governance (ibid). Ethics, service delivery and quality of service are the most components of civil service reform (Abdu, 2014). However, ethics, service delivery and quality of services in the selected offices for the study were discouraged. Another major challenges and problems that encountered the civil service reform of the country are dominantly concentrates on the administration and control of inputs and activities rather than on achievements of government policy and objectives (MoCS, 2012).

The key informants stated that the skilled manpower didn't attract and retain in the areas under the research due to the civil servants are underpaid and under-rewarded. Thus, the civil service's remuneration packages need to be modified in order to maintain and attract quality and also to improve productivity (Zeidy, 1996). Moreover, the declining of public service ethics and social values are also another challenge of good governance in the court, finance and economic development and land administration offices in Mekelle city administration. Public service ethics is the standards of the public service, which emphasize equity, integrity, moral conduct and political neutrality (Elizabeth, 2005). However, the declining of social value of society itself is contributing to the lack of good governance. Values such as truthfulness, sincerity, impartiality and fairness are slowly failing from the public services. This declining value tends to encourage inefficiency and misappropriation of public money. The declining of civil service morale is also an impediment to the implementation of civil service reform (ibid). This might be emanated from poor payment and lack of incentive packages (ECA, 2003).

Problems with Effectiveness and Efficiency

Appointed individuals and public servants are expected to be effective and efficient in terms of utilizing the society's scarce resources and timely completion of duties and discharging responsibilities but the veracity on the ground depicted that in most sub-cities of Mekelle city administration there was inefficient and ineffective utilization of resources. Besides, there was great expectation that the civil service reform program would enhance effectiveness and efficiency in the day to day operation of civil servants. However, when it came to implementation, there were shortage of expertise, finance and lack of transparency, low motivation and commitment of leaders and officers in the city. It is also observed that there was difference from what is planned and what is being implemented, which generates doubt among leaders, employees and the large community. These situations are undermining the effectiveness and efficiency of the civil servants and their services system in promoting good governance and participation cultures.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Good governance is the essential requirements for any organization to achieve its mission, vision, to be recognized by its customers and all stakeholders. However, it is challenging by various challenges in both developed and developing countries. Ethiopia is one of these countries that facing good governance problems. Despite some opportunities, Mekelle city administration is also facing potential problems of good governance. These are lack of interaction between all stakeholders to successfully realize the good governance agenda, human resource capacity limited have been identified as the impediments to good governance. Low remuneration levels have also caused a problem in dissatisfaction officers/experts and these in turn have impeded good governance in the city. A large number of the political leaders and officers lack of necessary skill, motivation, vision, the passion, and the character to effectively govern its peoples. In addition to low participation of the communities, collective actions problems arise at multiple levels at the some sub-cities are also undermining good governance efforts in the city. Lack of culture of strong accountability, transparency, responsiveness and civil service reform problems, as well as problems with effectiveness and efficiency in the city are also harming the efforts of good governance in the Mekelle city administration. Despite these challenges there are an opportunities for good governance in the city in particular and in the country in general. These include Ethiopia has launched legal framework governing its budget, justice and land administration systems that derives from the 1995 Constitution. Policies and strategies have also been introduced to promote good governance in the country in general and in the city in particular.

The following recommendations are forwarded by the researcher based on the above

discussions. Every individual required to be dedicated to fulfill their responsibilities. In addition to this, giving long and short term training to the social court (judge) will be very vital to increase the capacity of judges and to help them for providing reliable and transparent decisions. Moreover, lack of human power has been observed in the court, which caused delay of justice in the city and as result, competent and equipped human power should be assign with needed resources to accelerate service delivery of the courts and other offices in the city. Finally, the researcher has recommended that inadequate research had been done on local governance challenges particularly on urban land administration office. In this office immense service users and major challenges for service provision had observed and thus it needs a further investigation.

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