

The Implementation of Recruitment and Selection in Civil Service Institutions of Oromia National Regional State, Ethiopia

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Abstract

Ethiopia is known as a country with thousands of years of government structure. In contrast, the modern civil service structure is only about one hundred years old. It was established in 1907 during the reign of Emperor Menelik. However, for almost fifty-five years, there was no legal system that uniformly governed the newly established civil service institutions. In 1962, the first civil service law was enacted with the aim of establishing meritocratic, efficient and effective civil service structure governed by specified rules and procedures. Despite the initiative to improve the civil service and the new laws, the civil service failed to achieve its objectives. After 1991, the current government took initiative to reform the civil service procedures including the human resource management system. The issue of recruitment and selection was one of the components of HRM reform that aimed to achieve a merit-based system. Studies revealed, however, that the implementation process was not going well. This article assesses the implementation of the recruitment and selection process in civil service institutions of Oromia National Regional State. Accordingly, the findings reveal that though the government showed commitment in developing a system that properly guides the process of recruitment and selection, the implementation process is not on track to achieve the desired merit-based system in the civil service sector of the region.

1. Introduction

Ethiopia is a country with thousands of years of government structure. Nevertheless, the introduction of modern civil service structure dates only to 1907 during the reign of Emperor Menelik (1889-1913). The focus was just to introduce ministries in the government structure. For almost fifty-five years, there was no uniform legal system that governed the newly established civil service institutions (Atikilt, 1996). The first civil service law known as Order Number 28 was enacted in 1962 during the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie (1930 -1974). The aim was to establish meritocratic, efficient and effective civil service governed by specified rules and procedures (Asmelash, 2000). This was the first attempt to consolidate and formalize the functions of civil service and at best was fragmented and sporadic. The law included the issues related to recruitment and selection, salary increment, performance appraisal, job evaluation and assessment, training of civil servants as well as the rights, duties and obligations of the civil servants (Adebabay, 2002). However, despite the initiative to improve the civil service and the new laws, the civil service failed to achieve its objectives (Atikilt, 1996). The problems were reflected in the form of politicization of the recruitment and placement process, high level of political interference and neglect of due process of law in matters of public concerns (MoCB, 2010).

After the downfall of the monarchy, the country was ruled under a socialist political ideology of the Dergue regime between the years 1974-1991. However, despite the change in political system the civil service continued to be governed with the same law. During this period, a new parallel party structure was introduced in the civil service with the mandate to assign party functionaries to key decision making positions. As a result, most of the positions at department levels were occupied by political assignees (Mehret and Paulos, 2000). With this, merit and professionalism were undermined once again. In general, the civil service failed to deliver the expected services to the public due to political interference, inefficient service, corruption and centralization of administration (Mehret, 1997).

In 1991, the current Ethiopian Government came to power and the introduction of new constitution brought about many political changes. The changes were, the introduction of multi-party system, market-oriented economy and federal form of government that resulted in the creation of nine (9) national regional states including Oromia National Regional State (Getachew and Richard, 2006). As a result, based on problems identified and recommendations forwarded, government took initiatives to reform the civil service in accordance with the changes introduced. Finally, in 1996 the overall civil service program comprising of different components was promulgated for implementation in civil service institutions throughout the country (AH Consulting, 2010).

Accordingly, as one sub program of the overall civil service reform, human resource management reform comprised of different components began to be implemented. Among others, it focused on issues of recruitment and selection with the aim of achieving merit-based system in the civil service through creation of fair, transparent, efficient, effective and modern recruitment and selection system (ibid). As a member state of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Oromia National Regional State civil service institutions have been implementing the reforms including the recruitment and selection component of HRM reform since 1996 (OCSGGB, 2012).

However, as the report of the Oromia Regional State Civil Service and Good Governance Bureau revealed, the implementation of the HRM reform including the issues of recruitment and selection underwent different challenges in the attempt to achieve the objectives set. The implementation problems were attributed to need of attitude change and lack of capacity of the reform implementers (ibid). The literature indicated that there were violations of merit principles, poor attention to human resource planning and definition of job requirements in recruitment and selection process in the country including the region under study (PSCAP, 2007; Tegene, 2007; AH Consulting, 2010).

2. Objectives of the Study

2.1 General Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study is to assess the implementation of merit principles, recruitment and selection procedures, definition of job requirements and human resource planning in the process of recruitment and selection in Oromia National Regional State Civil Service institutions against the objectives set to establish merit-based system.

2.2 Specific Objectives of the Study:

The specific objectives of the study are to:

1. Evaluate the extent to which merit principles as well as recruitment and selection procedures are properly implemented as per the guidelines in HRM manual of the Regional State.
2. Assess the presence and utilization of job descriptions as well as job specifications in the implementation of recruitment and selection.
3. Assess the presence of human resource planning system and its implementation in a way to support recruitment and selection process as well as achievement of the mission of the organization.

3. Review of Related Literature

Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment and selection are considered as searching for and obtaining potential candidates in sufficient numbers and quality so that the organization can select the most appropriate people to fill its job needs (McCourt and Awases, 2007). Similarly, Armstrong (2001) stated the aim of recruitment and selection in relation to obtaining the number and quality of employees with minimum cost that can satisfy the human resource needs of the organization. It covers both hiring new talent and reassigning serving staff including inter organizational transfers.

Specifically, recruitment, as defined by Bratton and Gold (2007), refers to a process used to attract potential capable applicants for employment in the organization, while selection is the process by which different instruments are used to choose from a pool of applicants who can fit with the required requirements.

Merit Principles

Merit principles, according to Adebabay (2011), involve dealing with people based on their knowledge, skills and other capabilities rather than irrelevant characteristics. Furthermore, according to United States of America civil service, merit principles include fair and open competition; fair and equitable treatment of employees; equal pay for equal work as well as rewarding excellent performance (ibid).

Accordingly, the Ethiopian civil servants proclamation No.515/2007 was ratified to provide the legal ground for the implementation of the overall HRM reform including recruitment and selection. The proclamation, in its Article 13, Sub-Article 2, states, "a vacant position shall be filled only by a person who meets the qualification required for the position and scores higher than other candidates" (FDRE civil servants proclamation 2007).

Recruitment and Selection Procedure

The recruitment and selection procedure is a framework that assists those involved in the process to ensure that organizations attract, select and retain the most suitable candidates by using efficient, fair, open and effective methods of attracting and selecting (Armstrong, 2006). It is expected that those involved have responsibility to ensure candidates are treated fairly as per procedure. In Ethiopian civil service including the region under study, there is an implementation manual that indicates the procedure of recruitment and selection to be followed uniformly by all civil service institutions.

Some studies echo the disadvantages of uniform recruitment and selection procedure. According to Bach in Asnake (2008), for example, centralized selection procedures and criteria as well as central control of staffing

tripled with political interference hinder organizations from attracting qualified candidates. Furthermore, inflexible recruitment and selection procedures and criteria can also negatively impact the interest of qualified employees from applying in the first place.

Definition of Job Requirements

Definition of job requirements involves preparing job descriptions and specifications in addition to deciding on the terms and conditions of employment (Armstrong, 2006). However, as examined by Mohammed (2008), Ethiopian civil service institutions fail to define jobs in detail with clear duties and responsibilities and even those inadequately defined are not regularly updated. The requirements also lack clearly specified candidate requirements. These deficiencies negatively impact the recruitment and selection processes.

Human Resource Planning

Human resource planning determines the human resources required by an organization to achieve its strategic goals. As defined by Bulla and Scott cited in Armstrong (2006), it is 'the process for ensuring that the human resource requirements of an organization are identified and plans are made for satisfying those requirements'.

It also addresses human resource needs both in quantitative and qualitative terms, which answers the required quality and number of human resources to facilitate effective recruitment and selection.

Human resource planning looks at broader issues relating to the ways in which people are employed and developed in order to improve organizational effectiveness. Therefore, it can play an important part in strategic human resource management (ibid).

Accordingly, human resource planning is included in the civil service proclamation of Ethiopia so that all civil service institutions employ it. As stated in the country's civil service proclamation, its purpose is 'to enable a government institution to take measures to meet the objective specified in the strategic plan, to forecast its human resource demand, to acquire human resource in the right number and type, to develop and properly utilize it, monitor and evaluate its result and make corrective measures from time to time' (FDRE civil servants proclamation, 2007).

However, empirical studies blame the poor capacity of human resource planning in public sectors on developing countries including Ethiopia. It indicates they failed to plan the required human resources by qualification, motivation, and performance in addition to failure to provide an information delivery system in support of the planning process (Fritzen in Asnake, 2008; AH Consulting, 2010).

4. Research Methodology

Descriptive research method was employed since this method is highly recommended for obtaining information concerning current status of phenomenon under investigation and for describing "what exists" with respect to variables or conditions in a given situation (Kothari, 1996).

Questionnaires, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and document analysis were used to collect data from primary and secondary sources. The study includes a sample of civil service institutions, civil servants, and members of management at regional level. All the data obtained through questionnaires were organized with the aid of computer software known as Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) to make the computation precise, dependable and not time consuming.

The quantitative data obtained were classified under different categories based on the nature of the variables and then analyzed using frequency counts and percentages. Moreover, the qualitative data were coded and transcribed into written texts so that the analysis and interpretation can be done accordingly. Finally, results from the quantitative and qualitative sources were incorporated in a way that common patterns and contrary issues can be clearly identified so that triangulation, explanations and comparisons are possible among the available data.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Perception of Respondents on the issues of merit principles as well as recruitment and selection procedures

In the implementation of recruitment and selection, merit principles as well as recruitment and selection procedures were among the issues given due emphasis to bring about a merit-based system. The civil service institutions are also expected to seriously consider such issues in the process of recruitment and selection. This section attempts to discuss to what extent merit principles as well as recruitment and selection procedures are considered in civil service institutions of the region.

Table 1:

Is there awareness about the presence of the system of recruitment and selection that the implementation process should be based on?

			Yes	No	Don't know	Total
Sex	Male	Count	9	0	2	11
		% within Sex	81.8%	.0%	18.2%	100.0%
	Female	Count	7	1	2	10
		% within Sex	70.0%	10.0%	20.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	16	1	4	21
		% within Sex	76.2%	4.8%	19.0%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Table 1 indicates that 76.2% of the respondents have awareness about the presence of the system while 19% of the respondents have no idea about the system. 4.8% replied that there is no such system that guides the implementation of recruitment and selection. Thus it can be concluded that a large majority of the respondents know about the presence of the system.

For the question of proper implementation, of respondents who accepted the presence of the system, 75% indicated that it is properly implemented, while 25% rejected its proper implementation. The large majority of respondents thus felt that the system is implemented properly. The not too small negative reviews coupled with similar criticism from the management group, it is clear that there is a gap that must be filled so as to gain the confidence of at least most of the respondents.

Table 2:

The recruitment and selection guidelines are considered as formal manual in the implementation of recruitment and selection

			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Comment	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Sex	Male	Count	0	4	2	1	4	11
		% within Sex	.0%	36.4%	18.2%	9.1%	36.4%	100.0%
	Female	Count	2	0	3	2	3	10
		% within Sex	20.0%	.0%	30.0%	20.0%	30.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	2	4	5	3	7	21
		% within Sex	9.5%	19.0%	23.8%	14.3%	33.3%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2014

A manual has been prepared that documents the process of recruitment and selection in the civil service institutions. The manual covers the issues of merit principles like qualifications, work experience, knowledge, skills as well as other capabilities and the overall procedure to achieve fair and open competition.

The respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement about the extent to which the guidelines in the manual are considered. As it can be seen from Table 2, 47.6% of the respondents agreed while 28.5% disagreed and 23.8% of respondents chose not to give comment. This means less than half of the respondents perceived that the guidelines are considered in the process of recruitment and selection. On the other hand, more than half of the respondents including those who didn't comment were not confident enough with strict consideration of the guidelines. To these respondents, including those participated in discussion, the guidelines are violated to the extent that individuals are selected and assigned without competition and on the basis of personal and political interferences. The overall sentiment of the respondents appears to indicate that the guidelines are not strictly considered as required in a way that convince and satisfy most of the respondents.

The question related to the presence of effective monitoring mechanism was also raised to respondents. The response indicates that 57% agreed on the presence of monitoring mechanism while 10% strongly disagreed and 33% gave no comment. These show that almost 43% of respondents including those who didn't comment were not confident in the implementation of effective monitoring mechanism.

The commitment of management to follow-up on the proper implementation of the guidelines was also questioned. Here, only 48% of respondents were satisfied while 52% of respondents were dissatisfied. In the follow-up discussions, managers were blamed for their contribution to the improper implementation as they are the final body to ratify the selection. On the other hand, the managers replied that they are committed enough to follow-up the proper implementation of the guidelines. The data suggests that the commitment of the management to strictly follow-up the recruitment and selection process is not as such dependable.

5.2 Perception of respondents on the definition of job requirements

Definition of job requirements involves preparing job descriptions and specifications in addition to deciding on the terms and conditions of employment. This means, job descriptions and specifications have to do with recruitment and selection process. Accordingly, these issues are given due emphasis to play a role of achieving merit based system. This part tries to discuss to what extent jobs are described and specified in the implementation of recruitment and selection.

Table 3:

Is there a detailed job description for all job positions in your organization that can be utilized during recruitment and selection process?

			Yes	No	Don't know	Total
Sex	Male	Count	3	6	2	11
		% within Sex	27.3%	54.5%	18.2%	100.0%
	Female	Count	3	6	1	10
		% within Sex	30.0%	60.0%	10.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	6	12	3	21
		% within Sex	28.6%	57.1%	14.3%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2014

As can be seen from Table 3, 28.6% of respondents accept the presence of detailed job descriptions in the implementation of recruitment and selection process. 57.1 % of the respondents rejected the premise while almost 14% gave no comment. The managers' response also indicated that job descriptions were not given due emphasis especially for jobs created after the introduction of business process reengineering. From the discussion, it is clear that the large majority of respondents denied the presence of detailed job description and its implementation in the recruitment and selection. Therefore, it can be said that the respondents were not provided even their own job description to help them lead their day-to-day activities.

Question was also raised to respondents in relation to the issue of job specification such as qualification, experience, knowledge and talent and other related issues. The response indicates that 76% accept the presence as well as its utilization in the process of recruitment and selection while 14% rejected and 10% of respondents were neutral. From the discussion, it is obvious that respondents were convinced that job positions are specified and utilized in recruitment and selection. However, in relation to specifying the educational qualification required for the job, respondents commented that the concept of 'Related fields' is confusing and gives room to misinterpretation. On the other hand, almost a quarter of the respondents including those who gave no comment were not confident with the presence and implementation in recruitment and selection process. Therefore, it can be said that the implementation of job specification in recruitment and selection is encouraging while there are some gaps to be filled.

5.3 Perception of respondents on issues related to human resource planning and its Implementation in recruitment and selection process

Human resource planning determines the human resources required by the organization. It addresses the human resource needs of an organization both in quantitative and qualitative terms to facilitate effective recruitment and selection. Accordingly, it is given due emphasis and the civil service institutions are required to have a system of human resource planning. This section answers the extent to which the requirements of human resources are planned and support the process of recruitment and selection in civil service institutions.

As shown in Table 4, 66.7% of respondents rejected the presence of the human resource planning system in their organization and 28.6% agreed while 4.8% remained neutral. The literature review indicated that some institutions do make attempts to plan their human resource requirement. Generally, the findings indicate that the system is established in some institutions while other institutions lag behind.

Table 4:

Is there formal system of human resource planning in your organization?

			Yes	No	I don't know	
Sex	Male	Count	1	9	1	11
		% within Sex	9.1%	81.8%	9.1%	100.0%
	Female	Count	5	5	0	10
		% within Sex	50.0%	50.0%	.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	6	14	1	21
		% within Sex	28.6%	66.7%	4.8%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2014

Among those who accepted the presence of human resource planning system, only 14% agreed that the plan is in line with staffing needs and goal of the organization. However, 86% claimed that the plan is not

prepared in a way that indicates the staffing needs of their organization. For them, it is just prepared to fulfill the expected requirement. The managers also agreed that the plan is not prepared with deep analysis and does not consider the existing and future human resource requirements of the organization. From the discussion, it is clear that the large majority of the respondents who accepted the presence of the system believed that the plan is not well prepared in a way that reflects the real human resource requirements of their organization. Here we see that the managers and respondent agree that existing plans do not reflect the real picture of the human resource requirements of the organizations.

Table5:

Human resource plan of the organization as reference document for recruitment and selection process

			Strongly Disagree	Disagree	No Comment	Agree	Strongly Agree
Sex Male	Count		0	2	5	4	0
	% within Sex		.0%	18.2%	45.5%	36.4%	.0%
Female	Count		1	1	1	5	2
	% within Sex		10.0%	10.0%	10.0%	50.0%	20.0%
Total	Count		1	3	6	9	2
	% within Sex		4.8%	14.3%	28.6%	42.9%	9.5%

Source: Field Survey, 2014

A question was also raised on whether or not the existing human resource plan is used as a reference in the process of recruitment and selection. As can be seen from Table 5, 52.4 % agreed that it is. On the other hand, 47.6 % of the respondents including those who remained neutral were not confident that it did. They argued that the recruitment and selection process is mainly implemented to complete the structure of the organization rather than based on the required human resource needs. From the discussion, it is clear that even though the majority of respondents indicated that the document is used as a reference, almost equal proportion of the respondents did not agree. Therefore, it can be said that the existing human resource plans of the organizations are not used as reference in the recruitment and selection process.

The study indicates that a large majority of the workforce in civil service institutions is not aware of the human resource planning system that guides the process of recruitment and selection. Even those aware are not confident that the preparation is in line with the staffing needs or the goals of their organization. It can also be concluded that the planning system is not established in a way that clearly sets the human resource requirements nor does it support the proper implementation of the recruitment and selection system to achieve merit-based system.

6. Conclusion

Recruitment and selection is one important component of the human resource management reform of Ethiopia. It was introduced to bring about a merit-based system in civil service institutions throughout the country including in Oromia National Regional State. The reform is developed to solve the problems that were identified in the process of recruitment and selection that hindered the achievement of merit-based system in the civil service.

Accordingly, the issues related to merit principles, recruitment and selection procedures, definition of job requirements and human resource planning were given due emphasis to properly consider in the process of recruitment and selection in a way that supports the achievement of merit-based system in the civil service. Based on the overall objectives of the HRM reform, the then Oromia Civil Service Commission and currently known as Civil Service and Good Governance Bureau developed and distributed an implementation manual that guides the implementation of recruitment and selection in civil service institutions of the region.

As found in the study, there indeed exists a system that guides the process of recruitment and selection in civil service institutions, but there is a gap with regard to its proper implementation. It was discovered that there is a tendency of violating the guidelines in the implementation manual. The monitoring mechanism is also not effective as a direct result of negligence on the part of management.

The implementation of job specifications seems encouraging with some limitations. Job descriptions are not utilized at expected level to support the implementation of recruitment and selection. The implementation of human resource planning is not as such promising. The human resource plan is not prepared in a way to clearly reflect the picture of human resource requirements of the civil service institutions. The plan is not regularly used as reference material in the recruitment and selection process.

Finally, it can be concluded that though the government showed commitment in developing a system that properly guides the process of recruitment and selection, the implementation is not on the right track leading to the achievement of merit-based system in the civil service of the region.

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