

# Recruitment and Promotion Practices in the Ethiopian Civil Service

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## Abstract

The aim of this research is to scrutinize the meritocracy of the civil service in terms of merit principles. To this end, the research question is: to "what extent is the civil service characterized by meritocratic recruitment and offer predictable, rewarding long-term careers; and what factors influence meritocratic recruitments and career developments in Ethiopian civil service?" In this context, meritocracy, and politics - bureaucracy relationship, and neutrality of the bureaucracy are important factors that determine the professionalization of the bureaucracy; hence discussed in detail. The research approach is basically qualitative case study. The actual data collection has covered three ministries. The instruments that have been used for collecting data are in-depth interview with key informants; focus group discussions; and document analysis. Given the findings of this research, though series of reforms were introduced to modernize and professionalize the bureaucracy since 1990s, a little has been done on consolidation of meritocratic system in the process of recruitment, training and promotion of the administrative machine. Hence, one of the key challenges that are hindering the Ethiopian federal civil service from being professional is lack of institutionalizing and safeguarding the merit principle of recruitment and promotion. The other is the lack of development of a professional and politically neutral civil service.

**Keywords:** Ethiopian civil service, recruitment, promotion

## Chapter One: Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Ethiopia started to establish its modern organizations before any formal education. This implies that these ministries were run by feudal lords and priests, with a slight of knowledge reading and writing obtained from church education. Hence, the establishment of the modern administration had not been accompanied by a personnel rule and regulations which led the administration of government offices to be based on the goodwill of each government official and the clergy of the time. Indeed, the initial years were characterized by inadequate structures, inefficient services, corruption, and the interference of the nobility in the due process of law in matters of public (MoCSGG 2012).

During Menelik's time, the ministers were not salaried and appointment was based on loyalty and the number of followers that they could mobilize during wartime. The civil service was also small in number and was primarily engaged in maintaining law and order.

Emperor Haile Sellassie I (1930-1974) had the best claim of instituting modern public administration in Ethiopia. It was during his reign that the process of centralizing and modernizing the state reached a relatively advanced stage and the modernization of the state was promoted. During his reign, Emperor Haile Sellassie undertook a series of institutionalization and restructuring measures in the hope of bringing about an effective and efficient civil service governed by specified rules and procedures of a uniform nature. The Emperor attempted to institutionalize the rule bound public administration by establishing successive legal frameworks (Bahiru 1991):

- i. The establishment of the Imperial Institute of Public Administration in 1952: Its objectives included training of civil servants, consultation and research.
- ii. The enactment of basic regulations governing the civil service through the Public Service Regulation no. 1, 1962 and the Public Service Position Classification and Scale regulation no. 1, 1972.
- iii. The establishment of the Central Personnel Agency by Order no. 23 of 1961 and amended by Order no. 28 of 1962: The emperor, with the support of the French, established Central Personnel Agency to administer government employees. Creation of the Central Personnel Agency was a landmark in the proper formation of the civil service administration. Influenced by Europeans, the central personnel agency was structured in line with bureaucratic principle of a strictly defined hierarchy governed by clearly defined regulations and lines of authority. The agency's primary objective was to maintain an efficient, effective and permanent civil service based on a merit system. The following are some of the tasks of the agency and other related administrative measures taken during the period (Asmelash 1972; Atkilt 1998): establishing a homogeneous public service governed by uniform rules and principles; Recruitment of both classified and unclassified public servants; appointments up to the rank of Assistant Minister; and instituting a pension scheme for public servants.

These legal documents and legislations attempted to introduce merit as a criterion for appointment, replacing the old method which was based on favoritism or ascription. The appointment, promotion, transfer,

suspension, retirement, dismissal and discipline of all other government officials and employees was to be governed by regulations made by the Council of Ministers, to be approved and proclaimed by the Emperor.

However, though significant change has been observed in the affairs of public administration, the basic framework and assumptions were still persisted. Nonetheless, the absence of strict adherence to the civil service rules and regulations, and political interference in administrative affairs were seen as chronic problems of the time. Given the very nature of the regimes and among other things, due to the high regard given to political loyalty in assigning civil service posts and the level of political interference affecting standard operating procedures, the Civil Service failed to deliver the intended service to the public.

People were employed and got into work with the personal acquaintances and relationships of the nobility. Anyone who has not some kind of relationships no matter how intelligent was refused to get any kind of service as well as employment. It was, therefore, a widely established culture among the people to pay tribute and bribe to the nobility in order to get any kind of service from the public office. Judges and local officials were under the influence of the nobility. Therefore, justice was easily and obviously violated based on the quality and amount of bribe paid (MoCS 2012).

The Military government which took power through *coup de at* in 1974 established its own image in the public service. The nationalization measures, along with the proliferation of new government institutions and corporations led to a tremendous expansion of the public sector.

During this period there were no fundamental reform measures promulgated to alter or modify the functioning and management of the civil service. Except for the introduction of a few reform measures, the civil service operated under the different orders and decrees issued during the reign of Haile Sellassie.

Among some of the civil service reform measures taken during the period of the *Dergue*<sup>1</sup>, the expansion of the state apparatus and the restructuring of the cabinet could be mentioned. Some new ministries, commissions, agencies and authorities were created, others were merged or dissolved. Many were also renamed. A case in point is the Central Personnel Agency that was renamed the Public Service Commission. The *Dergue* also took some reform measures with regard to the salary scale of the civil service. The major ones were: the increase in the starting salary of the civil service from Br. 25 to Br. 50 (in 1975) and a shift in the ceiling from Br. 285 to Br. 636 for eligibility to periodic salary increment (in 1982).

During the period of the *Dergue* many problematic situations that crippled the civil servants were observed. Some of them were: the lack of trust, respect and confidence of the politicians as regards the career civil service personnel; absence of competitive merit-based recruitment and promotion practices at higher and middle level posts and, poor pay. These mal-practices in the civil service demoralized and demotivated a good number of them (Atkilt 1997: 75).

Moreover, the *Dergue* regime was put in disarray by the fusion of the institutions of party, state and government. It also encouraged the proliferation of parallel structures by appointing party functionaries to key decision-making civil service positions. Hence duplication and fragmentation of public functions and the downplaying of merit and professionalism became the order of the day. The subsequent years were characterized by the centralization of administration in addition to the increase of corruption, inefficient service delivery and the routine neglect of the due process of law in matters of public concern. The *Dergue* were finally ousted by the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) in 1991, despite some belated attempts at economic and political reform (Paulos 2011).

Moreover, as indicated by (Paulos 1997), there was another peculiar constraint of the time: During the *Dergue* regime the government ruled by edicts and decrees. There was a confusing pattern of political appointments. In most of the cases many of the higher, middle and even lower level posts in the different ministries and agencies were posts of confidence. There were two confusing structures - the political and the functional. All the decisions in the civil service institutions were made through the political structures by political cadres. There was virtually no place for apolitical professionals. It can be argued that it was this situation which led to an increasing amount of corruption, serious operational problems, inefficiencies and other administrative problems.

In early years of 2000s, the developmental state rhetoric surfaced in Ethiopian politics. A policy discussion document 'Democratic Developmental State' was produced in 2003 by the incumbent government. A series of seminars and conferences have been organized around this issue. Hence, taking into consideration the claim made by Ethiopian government as developmental state it is imperative to evaluate the civil service weather it is in alignment with the requirement of developmental state, inter alia, meritocratic bureaucracy.

Accordingly, this paper intends to discuss on meritocracy of the Ethiopian bureaucracy based on empirical data so as to answer the question 'to what extent the Ethiopian civil service is characterized by meritocratic recruitment to fulfill the feature of the bureaucracies in developmental states?' To this end, data are collected from three federal ministries through interview, focus group discussions and relevant documents.

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<sup>1</sup> A military junta that ruled Ethiopia from 1974 - 1991

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

State effectiveness is highly dependent on public service strength. Without strong and competent bureaucracy, effective deliberation of services, and implementation of other developmental goals is impossible. Thus, the quality of public service/bureaucracy is a key determinant of 'state effectiveness'.<sup>1</sup> In this sense, effective public service/bureaucracy is the instrument through which development goals are attained.

Therefore, as a developmental state, Ethiopia needs to have a public service which is competent, professional, autonomous, and strong among other qualities; if it desires to use the state as a very important vehicle to realize its developmental objectives.

However, Ethiopian public service is said, by government and others, to be weak thereby it is a daily news and confession from government (see, many reports for the parliament and higher government officials press release) that implementation failure is the major problem of the government. In the same token, researches on Ethiopian developmental state (see for example, UNDP 2012; Desta 2012; Fantini 2013) criticize the current public service as ineffective and dysfunctional to implement policies and carry out the ideals of Developmental state (DS).

These researches and other critics mention many virtues which the Ethiopian public bureaucracy lacks *vis – a – vis* developmental state qualities. *Inter alia*, lack of professionalism and commitment needed to mobilize the limited resources of the state for development (Desta 2012:7); lack of political neutrality of the bureaucracy (Tesfaye, n.d:1); lack of institutional autonomy (Desta 2012:5; Fantini 2013:4) are said to be the traps that impede the bureaucracy from accomplishing its *raison d'être*. In the same line of critics, Tesfaye (n.d:1) stated that “civil service structures and other benefits generated by state – led development were frequently manipulated by the government apparatus and ruling elites as a source of patronage”.

Desta (2012:7), also puts that “many fruitful projects were unduly delayed because the functionaries lacked the professionalism and commitment needed to mobilize the limited resources of the nation for development”. What is more, bureaucratic elites who design and manage Ethiopia’s short and long-term plans are not politically neutral.

In this juncture, therefore, it is imperative to question why the Ethiopian civil service has failed to effectively realize its mission - effective implementation of developmental objectives. To this effect, looking at the Ethiopian civil service and searching for the developmental civil service attributes which Ethiopian civil service misses, in this regard, is a critical task.

## 1.3 Objective of the Study

### 1.3.1 General Objective

The overall objective of this study is **to investigate whether the Ethiopian civil service has attributes of developmental civil service which enable it to carry out developmental state objectives.**

### 1.3.2 Specific Objectives

In order to realize the general objective, some specific objectives also need to be achieved. For this effect, the intended specific objectives which are derived from the general objectives are:

1. To evaluate the legal frameworks related to recruitment;
2. To scrutinize the meritocracy of the civil service in terms of merit principles;
3. To identify the challenges regarding the practices of meritocracy in the civil service.

## 1.4 Research Questions

This research is guided by the main research question: "To what extent the civil service is characterized by meritocratic recruitment and offer predictable, rewarding long-term careers; and what factors influence meritocratic recruitments and career developments in Ethiopian civil service?"

The research also sets the following pertinent specific research questions:

- 1: Is there any gap in the legal frameworks that may hinder meritocracy of the civil service?
- 2: To what extent the civil service is characterized by meritocratic recruitment and offer predictable, rewarding long-term careers; and what factors influence meritocratic recruitments and career developments in Ethiopian civil service?
- 3: What are the challenges that are hindering the civil service from being developmental?
- 4: What appropriate measures shall be taken to build up developmental civil service?

## 1.5 The Scope and Limitation of the Research

Basically, this research confines its scope essentially to the study of the Ethiopian civil service in light of the attributes of developmental states bureaucracies. In doing so, the focus has been on federal government institutions. Accordingly, three ministries, namely, Ministry of public service and human resource, ministry of

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<sup>1</sup> The ability of public institutions to deliver services, and to implement policies and programs.

finance and economic development, and ministry of industry have been taken as case studies.

### **1.6 Significance of the study**

This research has the potential to benefit the state and others in many ways. First, the research can point out and show the way how opportunities are to be exploited and challenges are to be tackled in the processes of creating developmental public service in Ethiopia. Second, the findings may initiate academia, researchers, civil servants as well as politicians by provoking thoughts and stimulating discussions. In addition, since adequate literature on Ethiopian developmental state in general and the public service aspect of it in particular is lacking, the findings may fill such a gap and serve as one of the references for further studies.

## **2. Literature Review**

The civil service is the major facilitator for implementation of the will of the state as expressed through public policy; and it is a professional body of officials, permanent, paid and skilled. It is a system that offers equal opportunities to all citizens to enter the government service, equal pay to all employees doing work requiring the same degree of intelligence and capacity, equal opportunities for advancement, equal favorable conditions and equal participation in retirement allowances and makes equal demands upon the employees (Rauch and Evans 2000). It is indispensable to the functioning of the modern state; that is why the fate of a society is largely determined by the performance of the public service (ibid).

The major requirement of meritocratic civil service is that it should be impartially selected, administratively competent, politically neutral and imbued with the spirit of service to the community (Leftwich 1995). Meritocratic recruitment and career progression are, therefore, the key features of Weber's ideal type bureaucracy. Meritocratic civil service emphasizes talent and education. It is a system of bureaucracy based on ability rather than by wealth, race or other determinants of induction. The concept of meritocracy is also based on the foundation that it promises equal opportunities to all job candidates both in the private business and the public sector irrespective of political affiliation and political activism, race, gender, class, etc.

However, though meritocracy is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the state to be developmental (see Rauch and Evans 2000); it is strongly needed to build a capable, career-oriented and professional civil service. Hence, human resource management and development processes in effective bureaucracies are required to abide with competence-based recruitment, promotion, appraisal, remuneration, etc. based on merit principles.

Literature tells us that the bureaucracies in successful developmental states were characterized by meritocratic recruitment, provision of promotion incentives, rationality and guarantying high levels of prestige and legitimacy to bureaucratic officials (Johnson 1982). This has also been identified in the developmental state literature as a key factor distinguishing developmental states from neo-patrimonial; whereby in the former recruitment and promotions in the bureaucracy are meritocratic, they are more personalized in the latter (Leftwich 1995). Meritocratic bureaucracies, in successful developmental states, typically attracted the best graduates in a country, who upon entering public administration, were able to follow long-term career paths, and worked according to the rules and established norms within the bureaucracy (Dasandi 2014).

In Korea, for example, major reform took place in the bureaucracy in 1960s. Accordingly, the government reintroduced a highly competitive and open exam system for the higher and lower echelons of the civil service that attracted the best Korean students from the country's two universities due to the social prestige usually associated with administrative positions. What is more, strong policy of internal promotion and reducing the share of appointees also contributed to bureaucratic competence in the Korean developmental state (Mah 2011). Similarly, the public administration in Singapore is probably the most educated professional body among public servants in the world and constitutes a major explanatory factor in the meteoric rise of that country (Adei 2008). The absence of meritocratic bureaucracy, on the other hand, is generally seen to produce public administrations which are inflated, inefficient, dishonest, and lacking autonomy from political leaders (Smith 2009).

In early years of 2000s, the developmental state rhetoric surfaced in Ethiopian politics. A policy discussion document 'Democratic Developmental State' was produced in 2003 by the incumbent government. A series of seminars and conferences have been organized around this issue. Hence, taking into consideration the claim made by Ethiopian government as developmental state it is imperative to evaluate the civil service weather it is in alignment with the requirement of developmental state, inter alia, meritocratic bureaucracy.

Accordingly, this chapter intends to discuss on meritocracy of the Ethiopian bureaucracy based on empirical data so as to answer the question 'to what extent the Ethiopian civil service is characterized by meritocratic recruitment and it offers predictable, rewarding long-term careers; and what factors influence meritocratic recruitments and career developments?'

## **3. Methodology**

### **3.1 Qualitative Case Study Approach**

The research approach is basically qualitative in nature and mixed methods are used as data collection

techniques so that supplementary quantitative data are used in simple descriptive statistics. Using qualitative research methods give the opportunity to dive deeper into the investigated phenomenon.

Strategically, following Babbie's (2006) categorization of social research on the basis of purpose as exploratory, descriptive and explanatory, this qualitative research employed an exploratory and explanatory research with certain shared characteristics of descriptive research. It is a *holistic multi – case study research*, but the researcher is critical of whether the results can be applied in different contexts.

### 3.2 Data Sources and Data Collection Instruments

The study has collected, collated and analyzed both primary and secondary data. The actual data collection has covered key offices within the public service which are selected purposely. To this effect, three ministries: Ministry of Civil Service and Good Governance (Ministry of Public Service and Human Resource), Ministry of Finance and Economic Development, and Ministry of Industry which are purposely selected for their strong relevance vis-à-vis the issue under study. If one sees other developmental states the role of civil service is obvious). Similarly, since industrialization is the *sine qua non* of developmental states, ministry of industry plays a crucial role in realizing the developmental state ideals. In the same line of argument, ministry of finance and economic development plays vital role in state led development. The ministry direct and regulate the scarce financial resources towards priority areas. This is done through instruments like monetary and fiscal policies. Thus, the quality of the ministries' bureaucracies matters most in realizing the objectives of developmental states. This is because, when the capacity of the civil service to discharge its responsibility is low, the implementation of government policies and strategies will fall in a trap.

As to secondary data, the research has reviewed related literature on developmental state in general and the Ethiopian state in particular. For this purpose, various materials including periodicals, books, and a range of relevant sources which are combined with data from a previous official study such as reports on progress, evaluation and seminars, and unpublished reports are searched.

The instruments that have been used for collecting data are in-depth interview with key informants; focus group discussions; and document analysis. The total of sixty-three personnel which include senior officers, senior experts, team leaders, and technical experts, from the three ministries have participated in interview, and focus group discussions. The same group and number of personnel also filled in the questioner. These peoples have been specifically selected for their specific knowledge of the information needed for the study. A review and analysis of documents also has enabled the research not only to look for facts, but also to read between the lines and pursue corroborative evidence elsewhere.

## 4. Discussions

### 4.1 The Legal Framework Governing the Ethiopian Civil Service

Ethiopia is a federal state with civil service system at the central, state and local government levels. Therefore, the Ethiopian bureaucracy comprises many local governments' civil services, nine regional states civil services, two city administrations, federal civil service and several federal and state government agencies, parastatals and corporations. An examination of bureaucracy under this and consequent chapters shall basically focus on the federal civil service. It is however pertinent to point out that the nature and character of bureaucracy at the central level to some extent give a general picture of what is obtainable at the different states of the federation.

The currently effective rule under implementation for the Ethiopian civil service is the Federal Civil Servants Proclamation No. 515/2007, which has been made effective to address the problems identified during the implementation of proclamation No. 262/2002. Every aspects of the Ethiopian civil service are supposed to function in accordance with this proclamation and the then FDRE ministry of civil service (now ministry of Public service and Human Resource) follows up if every civil service institution implement the proclamation accordingly.

In the context of Ethiopia, the public service is broadly defined as those employees of the state who are covered by national and civil service laws. Accordingly, civil servants are government employees that are governed by the Federal Civil servants' Proclamation number 515/2007. According to the Federal Civil Servants Proclamation Number 515/2007, Article 1: Civil servant means a person employed permanently by federal government institution; provided, however, that it shall not include the following:

- a) government officials with the rank of state minister, deputy director general, and their equivalent and above;
- b) members of the House of peoples' Representatives and the House of Federation;
- c) federal judges and prosecutors;
- d) members of the armed forces and the federal police including other employees governed by the regulations of the armed forces and the federal police; and
- e) Employees who are excluded from the coverage of this proclamation by other appropriate laws.

It excludes, however, elected officials, legislators, judiciary, armed forces or federal police. The civil service denotes the *non-political* or *permanent executive* recruited to serve the government in the implementation of

policies through the management and conduct of governmental affairs.

Many of the merit principles, in setting up career structures from recruitment to promotion, are adapted to Ethiopian Civil Servants' Proclamation. It must be clearly understood that though having the right merit principles by law is the corner stone of any professional civil service, precaution must be taken that serious violation of these principles leads to ineffectiveness. In fact, it is also taken as an indication of a patronage system in which ignorance is reined and celebrated.

The Ethiopian civil service applies a "career-based system" of employment for civil servants in few sectors' civil servants, like teachers and health professionals and a "position based" system for others. Typically, civil servants are recruited at various services and grades within the public service. Entry grades may be at junior level or at senior level. "A vacant position shall be filled only by a person who meets a qualification required for the position and scores higher than any other candidates" (Federal Civil Servants Proclamation Number 515/2007, Article 13). Basically, therefore, it is more of a position-based civil service system. This shows that civil service institutions make an effort to match the competencies of new recruits to specific classified positions. Thus, in general, staffs are expected to successfully meet the position requirements and there are no specialist career paths.

The Federal Civil Service Proclamation lays down requirements for entry into the public service. Concerning selection and recruitment of new staff, the human resource planning of each civil service organization is expected to enable a government institution to take measure to meet the objective specified in the strategic plan and to forecast its human resource demand. In addition, the proclamation is also important 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. Accordingly, the proclamation 515/2007 of Federal civil service declares that while filling vacancies in the civil service, there shall be no discrimination among job seekers or civil servants because of their ethnic origin, sex, religion, political outlook, disability, HIV/AIDS or any other ground. Similarly, the HRM reform program has recognized that greater use of open recruitment and improved competitive promotions are fundamental to the on-going development of a "modern" civil service (FCSC 2002). Thus, at least legally public service positions are supposed to be filled on the basis of merit.

As stipulated in the FDRE constitution Article 74/2 the prime minister appoints ministries for ministerial posts (FDRE 1995). Similarly, regional governments appoint head of various institutions under their jurisdiction. It is, therefore, both at national and regional levels that ministers and bureau heads are expected to lead their respective offices, including HR activities. In many government institutions HR activity is located within specific HR unit within the ministry or bureau. Responsibility for examining and recommending a candidate for a post lies with the human resource/personnel department of the respective institution. Accordingly, civil service could recruit at department and service head levels. In the higher service the successful candidate is appointed to office by the concerned minister. The middle and lower staff are appointed to office by the director of the service concerned or the head of the personnel department of the ministry. Hence, despite the fact that the civil service is centrally controlled, staff management is still relatively decentralized in Ethiopian civil service.

According to FDRE Proclamation (No. 515/2007) promotion shall be given for the purpose of enhancing the performance of government institutions with an intention of motivating the employees. Similarly, transfer in the civil service system, whenever necessary, based on a transparent procedure. A government institution may transfer a civil servant to another similar position of an equal grade and salary or to another place of work within the government institution. This can happen among other government institutions also, whenever necessary and when the recipient and sender government institutions as well as the civil servant agree. Once the consent of the aforementioned parties is gained, transferring a civil servant to a similar position of equal grade and salary from other government institution by notifying the ministry can be done (ibid). According to this proclamation, the purpose of promotion and transfer is to enable civil servants to discharge their duties effectively in accordance with the expected level, quality standards and time and expense.

Concerning remunerations, the Ethiopian civil service proclamation states that any newly appointed civil servant shall be paid the base salary as fixed by the civil service salary scale for the position he/she is appointed. According to the proclamation, the civil service minister prepares a salary scale to be applicable to the civil service in general and submits the same to the Council of Ministers and supervises its proper implementation upon approval. The ministry also upon permission of the council of ministers and based on the specific nature of a government institution shall study salary scales and submits the same to the council. Upon approval, it supervises their proper implementation and when necessary, the ministry shall undertake periodical revisions of salary scales based on economic changes and other relevant conditions and submit it to the decision of the council of ministers. The proclamation also states that all positions of equal value shall have equal base salary and periodical salary increments to civil servants shall be based on their performance evaluation results: if a civil servant obtains an evaluation result of satisfactory or above satisfactory he/she shall be entitled to a salary increment to be made every two years (FDRE Proclamation No. 515/2007).

Generally speaking, the country has good policy frameworks that promote meritocratic recruitment

practices. However, empirical evidences in this study reveal that guideline for recruitment and other human resource functions are not mostly adhered to the legal frameworks. Thus, it can be argued that the problem is not the absence of legislative framework rather the implementation of the legislations.

#### **4.2 An Assessment of Recruitment Practices in the Ethiopian Civil Service**

Due to the increasing significance and importance of the civil service in developmental state and the assumption of responsibility by the government for the performance of various social and economic functions, it has become necessary to recruit competent candidates into the service. Hence, civil service institutions are expected to seriously consider such issues in the process of recruitment and selection. To this effect, the implementation of recruitment and selection, merit principles as well as recruitment and selection procedures are among the issues given due emphasis to bring about a merit-based system. This section, therefore, discusses to what extent merit principles as well as recruitment and selection procedures are considered in the three ministries under study.

A study by Tesfaye and Atakilt (2011) reveals human resource capacity gap as one of the critical challenge which is adversely affecting organizational efficiency, effectiveness and good governance in Ethiopian public organizations. Their assertion is in consistence with frequent reports of all three ministries studied as well as other concerned government officials. In their 2014/15 and 2015/16 annual implementation reports, the ministries admitted their inability to attract qualified personnel from the market. The shortage of skilled human resource across the civil service is further aggravated by insufficient recruitment practices.

The public-sector recruit's employees form universities, colleges, technical and vocational schools as well as from other sectors. In most cases the usual difficulty is that of attracting adequate numbers of civil servants with sufficient specialized trainings to enable them to carry out developmental states ideals.

Developmental states are characterized by competent, professional bureaucrats appointed through meritocratic processes. Thus, the recruitment, selection and appointment of civil servants were critical for the creation of stable, effective and efficient government administration. The logical implication is, therefore, since the employment life cycle begins with recruitment and selection, public sector employers, to stay competitive, must be critical in the hiring process.

As meritocratic bureaucracy is at the heart of state capacity, meritocratic recruitment is the center of meritocratic bureaucracy. Thus, the foremost factor that shapes the nature and character of bureaucracy is the meritocratic recruitment. The popular terminology "Garbage-in-Garbage-out" is relevant in explaining how recruitment of bureaucrats affects public service performance. This is because high quality recruitment procedure and assessment used at the point of hiring enables an organization to have the greatest impact on performance, productivity and retention. The point being stressed here is that bureaucratic competence is achieved by, among other things, the process of proper recruitment into the bureaucracy.

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 to the necessary requirements. Civil service recruitment, by implication, is the process through which suitable candidates are induced to compete for appointments into the civil service. The recruitment and selection procedure are 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. It is also expected that those involved have responsibility to ensure whether candidates are treated fairly per the procedure.

Literature on the East Asian developmental states stipulate that though the bureaucracy was challenged by geographical affiliation; school connection and kinship network, it is usually introduced as a meritocracy, united and coherent. For example, in Korea, "the bureaucracy was indeed selected according to a highly competitive entrance examination that has usually attracted the countries' best students" (Mah 2011: 7). What is more, Public servants were recruited through a closed - career merit system. That means, appointments were made on the basis of a university qualification and selection examination.

When we see the case of Ethiopia, Article 13, Sub-Article 2 of the FDRE civil servants proclamation states that "a vacant position shall be filled only by a person who meets the qualification required for the position and who scores higher than other candidates" (FDRE Civil Servants Proclamation, 2007). There is also an implementation manual that indicates the procedure of recruitment and selection to be followed uniformly by all 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. Thus, it can be argued that at policy level, except being position based system, the recruitment procedures and considerations are similar to other developmental states. However, in practice various reasons account for the non-meritocratic recruitment into the Ethiopian public services. Some of the challenges are discussed under this chapter and the others will be seen in the remaining subsequent chapters.

The first issue examined was how merit is considered; and whether non-meritocratic parameters influence the recruitment process in selecting candidates at entry level. To this effect, respondents were asked three

questions; all of the questions dealt with whether merit' or 'political connection' is considered as the major criterion in the selection process. The purpose was to know their perceptions regarding the criteria for recruitment at entry level.

As it is seen in table 1, the large majority, 80.8% of the respondents responded that a candidate's qualification is more important than political connection. However, 80% of the respondents believe that personal relationship plays important role in the selection of candidates. This means that though the role of political interference, at least at entry level, is insignificant, personal connections, by implication nepotism is prevalent in recruitment processes.

This indicates that the ministries, primarily at the entry level, are recruiting employees based on their qualification, experience and performance. However, this does not exclude the possibility of political affiliation in recruiting and promoting employees in the civil service. In fact, managerial positions, especially middle and higher ones, are reported to be exclusively reserved for politically loyal personnel with ethnic background supplement.

Empirical data obtained from focus group discussions and interviews also disclosed that there are violations of merit principles, poor attention to human resource planning and definition of job requirements in recruitment and selection process in the ministries under study. According to these respondents, the guidelines are violated to the extent that individuals are selected and assigned without competition and on the basis of personal connections and sometimes with 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 participants.

The related issue is that the Federal civil servants' recruitment manual states that civil service institutions shall set examinations to screen the most eligible candidates depending on the nature of respective organizations. In practice, however, recruitment under this provision has been negligible. Instead, Ethiopian civil service is characterized by "mixed" recruitment patterns which fall into two categories: those which recruit personnel by competitive written examinations and those which recruit them by comparison of the paper qualifications already possessed by the candidate.

The respondents were asked if the ministries use formal examination or not as selection instrument, at entry level. As table 2, depicts that the most common recruitment practice in the institutions under study does not apply formal examinations in screening the most eligible candidates. The most common practice is that screening of the candidates based on educational credentials and relevant work experience the candidates produce. In such institutions, the procedure for entry to the civil service requires the candidate to apply to an individual government institution in writing, stating his/her qualifications. As a result, civil service could recruit at department and service head levels; hence, most of the time, it is highly prone to nepotism.

To conclude, the abandonment of the guideline for recruitment into public service inadvertently opens the gate for entry into the service for incompetent persons. Therefore, merit is compromised; and real recruitment procedures and conditions represent one of the major problems in the ministries studied, thereof. This, to a large extent, affects the performance of the Ethiopian bureaucracy in the area of policy articulation, implementation and evaluation. It is worthy of note that the inadequacy of personnel, particularly as it relates to expertise and skilled manpower, results in part, from the personnel recruitment practices which are essentially based on non-meritocratic criteria which are against objectively measurable criteria like qualification and professional competence.

In addition to malpractices regarding recruitment, lack of proper and attractive incentives is also mentioned as factor affecting the competence and effectiveness of the civil service. The section below deals with this issue.

## **5. Findings and Conclusions**

### **5.1 The Legal Framework Governing the Ethiopian Civil Service**

The rules guiding recruitment have long been regarded as a key issue for successful policy implementation, regulation and provision of services. They refer not only to formal issues; such as the existence of an exam but also the ways that they operate in practice.

There are a range of laws and procedures which spell out the division of responsibility between ministers and civil servants, and in some cases by prohibiting politicians or civil servants from being involved in certain areas. In this regard, the main legislation related to the federal civil service is the Federal Civil servants Proclamation 515/2007. Other legislations, guidelines, and manuals guiding human resource functions also exist. As far as the legal framework governing the Ethiopian civil service system is concerned, it is concluded that:

- First, Ethiopian civil service system, in terms of recruitment and promotion, resembles to position - based system. The position-based system is more likely to be flexible but at the same time, it does not offer the employees career prospects. And the general idea is that one can hardly progress regardless of the upgraded educational degree or outstanding performance results.
- Second, at policy level, except being position based system, the existing legal provisions require the



recruitment and promotion procedures to be competitive and meritocratic. Hence, if the legal provisions are properly adhered, it is possible for the civil service be meritocratic in recruiting and promoting civil servants. However, empirical evidences in this research reveal that guidelines and procedures for recruitment and other human resource functions are frequently violated.

- Third, therefore, the problem of the country's public administration regarding recruitment and promotion is mostly related to poor implementation of the existing legal provisions and procedures.

## 5.2 Malpractices in Recruitment Practices

To achieve short or long term organizational goals, there is a need for efficient workforce which can only be attained by recruiting people with appropriate skills, qualifications and experiences. Strengthening appointments on merit which requires that the capable human resource be employed for governments to be able to execute their policies become efficient and effective. The findings in this research indicate that 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. Various reasons account for the non-meritocratic recruitment into the Ethiopian public services.

- First, the Ethiopian civil service basically applies a position-based civil service system. Thus, civil servants are recruited at various services and grades within the public service. In general, staffs are expected to successfully meet the position requirements and there are no specialist career paths. In most cases, the usual difficulty is that of attracting adequate numbers of civil servants with sufficient specialized trainings to enable them to carry out developmental states ideals.
- Second, Ethiopian civil service is characterized by "mixed" recruitment patterns which fall into two categories: those which recruit personnel by competitive written examinations and those which recruit them by comparison of the paper qualifications already possessed by the candidate. The most common recruitment practice in the institutions under study does not apply formal examinations in screening the most eligible candidates.
- Third, the practice demonstrates that bases for recruitment into the Ethiopian public sector has largely shifted from the principles of meritocracy (educational qualification and experience) towards factors such as nepotism, political patronage (godfatherism), and ethnicity.
- Fourth, the ministries, primarily at the entry level, are recruiting employees based on their qualification, experience and performance. Though the role of political interference, at least at entry level, is insignificant, personal connections, by implication nepotism is prevalent in recruitment processes. Of course, this does not exclude the possibility of political affiliation in recruiting and promoting employees in the civil service.
- Fifth, recruitment of senior civil servants is loosely regulated. Loose recruitment practices make senior civil service positions a subject of inter-party bargaining. In fact, managerial positions, especially middle and higher ones, are found to be exclusively reserved for politically loyal personnel with ethnic background supplement. This the lack of a system of publicly known and acknowledged political appointment at all levels of the civil service has been undermining of the career structure. It denies senior civil service positions to be held by competent career civil servants.

Generally, the abandonment of the guideline for recruitment into public service inadvertently opens the gate for entry into the service for incompetent persons. Therefore, merit is compromised; and real recruitment procedures and conditions represent one of the major problems in the ministries studied, thereof. This, to a large extent, affects the performance of the Ethiopian bureaucracy in the area of policy articulation, implementation and evaluation. It is worthy of note that the inadequacy of personnel, particularly as it relates to expertise and skilled manpower, results in part, from the personnel recruitment practices which are essentially based on non-meritocratic criteria which are against objectively measurable criteria like qualification and professional competence.

## 6. Recommendations

### • Attract and Retain Qualified Individuals for Management Positions

To attract and retain good staff is extremely important. It is a means to reach the operational objectives. This objective can be reached through introducing pay reform and permanent status, in combination with an improved definition of the role of managers in the operations of their institutions and in relation to their political masters. Although it is easy to define in theory the means to reach this objective, it is still very difficult to implement them. To raise salaries significantly for officials is difficult in times of financial constraints and budget deficits. Any country can of course afford to raise the salaries for a very limited number of officials. The question is then whether such a limited scope for a pay reform any impact on the general performance of the institutions will have if the pay reform does not gradually continue down to other levels of the administration as well.

However, the attraction and retention of qualified senior management cannot be carried out merely through

raising salaries with everything else remaining unchanged. Governments which aim to reform the management of public administration mainly by increasing the salaries of a limited number of officials without changing the administrative context, including the system for their selection and their professional role, risk ending up with an even lower confidence of the public, and without any guarantees for improvement in the administrative context or in the deliveries from the institutions.

It is also difficult to get acceptance from the public for a pay reform as long as it does not perceive that officials are selected on professional grounds through a transparent and competitive procedure.

- **Creating and Marketing Incentives other than Salary**

There is a wide-range of incentives beyond salary to enhance competitiveness. Since public sector salaries at the managerial and expert level cannot usually compete with those in the private sector, there is a real need to find other kinds of incentives; such as flexible working hours, flat hierarchies and a high standard of technical equipment?

- **Importance of Clear Career paths and Sufficient career planning**

To make career path opportunities clearer, strategic actions are needed at several stages. Recruitment situations give employers the opportunity to explain career prospects. Questions include how to incorporate career planning in regular performance and career discussions and how to create pay and other HRM systems that promote both kind of careers: one leading to leadership positions and one leading to expert positions. Increasing mobility is closely related to this issue.

- **Establishing an assessment center**

Such a center enables the combination of more selective methods, would be very useful in our conditions, as has been proven successful in many countries, not only for the selection of personnel to be employed in public administration, but also for career progression for employees who are already part of it.

- **Abide to Rules of Recruitment and Promotion**

There is also the need for a conscious effort by government leadership to reduce the extent to which politics infiltrates bureaucratic activities. This will ensure that bureaucrats in authority are allowed to exercise real control and authority and to be able to function freely and apply some basic ideals of Weberian model of bureaucracy in their administrative processes and procedures. Such will, indeed, allow for more effective functioning of the public bureaucracy.

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### Tables

Table 1 Perception of Respondents on the issues of recruitment and selection practices (Source: field survey, 2016).

		A	SA	NC	D	SD	Total
<b>When recruiting employees, the skills and merits of the applicants decide who gets the job</b>	Frequency	32	19	3	7	2	63
	Percent (%)	50.7	30.1	4.7	11.1	3.1	100
<b>When recruiting employees, the political connections of the applicant decide who get the job</b>	Frequency	5	4	3	32	19	63
	Percent (%)	7.9	6.3	4.7	50.7	30.1	100
<b>In the selection of an appropriate candidate, personal acquaintance plays a lesser role than political or party adherence.</b>	Frequency	29	2	3	7	2	63
	Percent (%)	45.2	34.9	4.7	11.1	3.1	100

Table 2, Responses regarding entrance examination (Source: field survey, 2016)

		Yes	No	Do Not Know	Total
<b>employees are hired via a formal examination system</b>	Frequency	15	46	2	63
	Percent (%)	23.8	73	3.1	100

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