

A Critical Analysis of Civil Service Reform Program in Ethiopia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to critically analyze the civil service program of Ethiopia with special emphasis on challenges and major achievements. In order to gather relevant data Secondary data were used as a main source of data. The secondary data includes; report, manuals, internal publications, journals and books. Studies conducted in CSRP indicated that some of the reform successes registered in some selected organizations was attributed to the competence and dedication of their leadership. However, many of the organization leaders in the civil service were believed to have blurred view about the mission and goal of CSRP. The study recommended that Ministry of Civil Service should make the reform internally identified and home grown to take the advantage from the implementation of the program.

Keywords: Civil Service, Civil Service reform

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1. INTRODUCTION

To increase efficiency and effectiveness of government institutions in Ethiopia and to create conducive environment for investment and economic growth, the public sector has gone through a series of reform processes. In recognition of the multifaceted problems facing, the Government of Ethiopia launched fourteen national capacity building reform programs (NCBRP). From fourteen NCBRP six of them directly involved in public sector which has got attention to rapidly scale up under a consolidated five year federal program called public sector capacity building program / PSCAP/. These are; (i) Civil Service Reform Program (CSRP); (ii) District Level Decentralization Program (DLDP); (iii) Urban Management & Development Programme (UMCBP); (iv) Tax System Reform Program (TSRP); (v) Justice System Reform Programme (JSRP); (vi) Information and Communication Technology (ICT) (CSRP ,2004).

The Civil Service Reform Program is a subset of a broader program of political, economic and administrative reforms intended to build national capacity for the realization of socio-economic development goals and objectives. Overall, it focuses on improving the scale, efficiency and responsiveness of public service delivery at the federal, regional and local level; to empower citizens to participate more effectively in shaping their own development; as well as to promote good governance and accountability (ibid).

Civil Service is the operational arm of the government charged with the implementation and administration of public policy (Atkilt 1996), must keep pace with the changing times in order to meet the aspirations of the people. The purpose of reform is to reorient the Civil Services into a dynamic, efficient and accountable apparatus for public service delivery built on the ethos and values of integrity, impartiality and neutrality. Thus, the impetus of Civil Service reform is to raise the quality of public services delivered to the citizens and enhance the capacity to carry out core government functions, thereby, leading to sustainable development. Hence, the government of Ethiopia through its Public Service Reform Programme continues to improve and modernize its systems to support the development of the country and provide timely and high quality services to all customers. The latest development in this process is the introduction of the civil service reform.

To this effect, Ethiopian Government has taken the initiative to build the capacity in all the regional states of the country:

- ✓ To shake off basic weaknesses ingrained in the existing Civil Service inherited from the past regime
- ✓ To build the capacity of the Civil Service so that it will execute the policies and programs of the government successfully
- ✓ To facilitate the Civil Service to provide efficient and fair services to the public
- ✓ To enhance transparency and accountability in the Civil Service
- ✓ To build a Civil Service that stands for gender and ethnic equality and rights
- ✓ To build a Civil Service that is ethically sound and free of corruption, nepotism, and favoritism

Generally, the study critically analyzes the Civil Service Reform Program of Ethiopia with special emphasis on Challenges and Achievements.

2. Justification of the Paper

It is apparent that efficient and effective civil service sector that plays a major role for the development of a nation in all dimensions. In other words, civil servants are an engine who mobilizes resources of a country to the direction of functional activities. However, this sector cannot play its decisive role in traditional and back ward

management systems unless it is updated and reformed to the changing circumstances. In most developing countries including Ethiopia, traditional management techniques play immense ingredient that influence working cultures almost in all sectors.

The Civil Service Sector in Ethiopia has been bewildered in a number of problems and challenges over the past years. Many scholars have raised different issues that might have attributes to the root problems in the Ethiopian Civil Service Sector. Government has also undertaken several measures to this end despite the implementation and design of programmes as well as the inception and selection of programmes have been arguably too restrictive.

The Ethiopian Civil Service Reform Programme is one effort by the government implemented to alleviate some of the problems associated with low level of service delivery in the Ethiopian Civil Service which is characterized by high inefficiency and ineffectiveness. The rationale behind this study is to show case the historical back ground of civil service sector in Ethiopia, discuss on the theoretical background, present overview of the current Civil Service Reform including the major challenges and problems faced to come to a reasonable conclusion up on which recommendations are made. In addition to this, the study critically analyses the procedures that a concerned body follow while developing a certain programme.

Accordingly, this study is meant to address the following questions through the literature and critical analysis:

- 1) Why the Civil Reform Program is designed and who is responsible for implementing the Program?
- 2) What are the causes behind the design of the Program and how the program contributed to the modernization of the civil service in Ethiopia?
- 3) What are the achievement and challenges of implementing Civil Service Reform Program of Ethiopia?
- 4) Does the Civil Service Reform Program of Ethiopia achieve the gap for which it has been designed?

3. Objective of the study

3.1 General Objective

The general objective of the study is to critically analyze the civil service Reform Program of Ethiopia.

3.2 Specific Objective

The study has also the following specific objectives:

- 1) To identify the reason and responsible body for the implementation of the Civil Service Reform Program in Ethiopia
- 2) To identify the rationales behind inauguration and contribution of the Program to the modernization of civil service in Ethiopia
- 3) To critically analyze the achievements and challenges of the civil service reform program in Ethiopia
- 4) To analyze whether the civil service reform program positively contributed towards filling the public sector gap

4. Methodology of the Paper

The paper is descriptive type of study which contains qualitative type of data. Secondary data is used as a main source of data; Report, manuals, internal publications, journals and books are used to assess theoretical and practical aspect of civil service reform in Ethiopia. Finally descriptive analysis is made by considering both theoretical and empirical literature for having critical analysis and extensive study on civil service reform program in Ethiopia.

5. Result and Discussion

5.1 Critical Analysis of the Civil Service Reform in Ethiopia

5.1.1 Main Features of civil services reform before and After Implementation

The Task Force which was constituted to investigate the existing gaps and problems in the public sector came up with certain report which indicated the following findings:

- ✓ Management concentrates on the administration and control of inputs and activities rather than achievement of government policy objectives;
- ✓ Management systems are outdated and unable to respond to the changing environment in which the Civil Service operates;
- ✓ The public's perception of the bureaucracy was one of a hindrance than a facilitator and called for changes in rules, regulations and practices which were inherited from the past;
- ✓ The Civil Service was under-resourced in terms of manpower and budget. Recurrent budget on Civil Service and the number of civil servants per 10,000 population was among the lowest in the world;
- ✓ The entrenched organizational culture is such that concentration of powers at the higher level of the Civil Service hierarchy poses serious problems of delegation;

- ✓ Staffs are under-paid and under-rewarded and hence the system does not attract and retain skilled manpower. Conversely, it has given rise to corruption and unethical practices.

The above bullet points serve as the basis for evaluating the performance of the programme notwithstanding the concern of the process through which these findings sprang up. This also pegs the question as to how these findings comprehend the overall all panorama of the civil service saga in this country covering all the possible challenges and problems to be addressed through informed policy adoption, programme design and implementation.

The first finding emphasizes on the concentration of the bureaucracy in the administration and control of inputs and activities rather than achievement of government policy objectives. Business Process Re-engineering (BPR), Result Oriented Performance Appraisal and other recent developments, notably, the adoption of the Balanced Score Card (BSC) and KAIZEN (Continuous Improvement) scheme were the efforts exerted through the program to align public discourse and implementation with national goals; albeit the existence of reservations from different scholars on their impact.

The noble intention of having free and neutral civil service where the civil servants serve the people rather than ruling parties without tampering the political will and leverage is seriously impeded by high politicization and patronage systems. Recent, practices show that civil servants are being appraised not only in terms of their contribution to the achievement of corporate goals but also to their political views.

Another finding indicated that the management systems are outdated and unable to respond to the changing environment in which the Civil Service operates. Institutionalization of strategic plans in the public sector and the implementation of the Business Process Re-engineering has created a space for improving the management system by creating means for transparency and accountability. As such the civil service before the programme was limited in differentiation and has a centralized outlook. This was resolved in the current decentralized arena as the contemporary system allows for the existence of management at different levels including ministerial offices, directorates, departments, units and teams.

The third finding that the public's perception of the bureaucracy was one of a hindrance than a facilitator and called for changes in rules, regulations and practices which were inherited from the past is something that calls for systematic intervention. The program does so by providing certain changes in policies, regulations, guidelines and the likes however fails to change the attitude of the public perceiving the bureaucracy as a fence hindering them to get their rightful services. Highly corrupt and inefficient officials and technocrats make the provision of descent services impossible as they hustle to satisfy their greed than the interest of the general public.

The findings of the task force also concluded that the Civil Service was under-resourced in terms of manpower and budget. Recurrent budget on Civil Service and the number of civil servants per 10,000 populations was among the lowest in the world. Current government figures show that there is a tremendous increment in the number of public servants. The civil service structure, however, is literally a transit place for professionals to get employment elsewhere which provide better payment. This is because the current civil service pay scale is very low compared to the living standard in the country. As a result, the civil service is a place for incompetent and ineffective personnel making it very difficult to achieve corporate goals.

Concentration of power at the top is one of the finding among study results on the former civil service. This type of centralized civil service system is resolved by decentralization of power at all level. As a result this brings improvement in the process and delivery of services by empowering the lower unit of the system, reducing stapes and procedures of service delivery and rapid decision making.

Concerning the last finding of the study which is under-payment and under-rewarded Staffs, the system does not attract and retain skilled manpower. Conversely, it has given rise to corruption and unethical practices. One of the effort made to overcome this problem is salary increment even if it doesn't solve the problem. Many authors agreed up on remuneration of civil servants is very much below the minimum standard of living in the cities and is lower than what they could earn in other sectors. It is significantly lower than the non-government sector resulting in an irreversible brain drain. Another challenge that arises from this is the fact that there is no differentiation between the core civil service and public service employees such as teachers, health workers and agricultural extension workers; making the civil service unmanageable. Under such conditions corruption get the great place to spread throughout the public sector and manipulate public resources.

5.1.2 Major Achievements of the Civil Service Reform in Ethiopia

The following are some of the major achievements of civil services reform in Ethiopia which include:

The Institutionalization of Strategic Plans in Public Sector Institutions

Public sector institutions have started to align their visions and missions with the national vision and to design their annual operational plans with the view to contribute their respective share to the attainment of institutional and national vision. As a result, the concept and application of strategic thinking, priority setting and rational resource allocation are taking stronghold in the public service.

The Initiation of Business Process Reengineering (BPR) in the Public Sector

In an effort to bring about dramatic changes in operational efficiency and effectiveness and increased customer needs satisfaction, civil service wide BPR initiatives were launched in 2005. Although a majority of the BPR exercises are still in progress, anecdotal evidence and a few research and survey results strongly indicate that the number of institutions where dramatic changes in performance are taking place is growing. A sampling of a few cases would suffice to demonstrate the case. According to a recent study commissioned by the World Bank the Federal Investment Agency (FIA) has drastically reduced the cycle time of its major operations, providing a more conducive environment for foreign and domestic trade and investment.

Finalization and Roll-out of A Results-Oriented Performance Appraisal System (ROPAS)

One of the most important goals of the civil service reform is to establish a results-oriented performance management culture. Over the past years various performance management models were reviewed for adoption and some were even pilot-tested. Currently, the performance management system based on Balanced Scorecard is adopted and being pilot-tested in selected federal institutions before civil service wide roll-out.

Completion of Roll-out of New and Improved Financial Management Systems

Roll-out of budgeting, accounts, cash and asset management, internal audit systems and procurement to the emerging regions excepting Somali Regional State, were successfully undertaken. After much delay in consultancy procurement the reform work on Integrated Financial Management System (IFMIS) is now underway. The EMC sub-programme has resulted in significance improvement in the use of double-entry accounting, ICT assisted accounting, regularity of reconciliation of fiscal and bank records, reducing of accounts backlog and the state of internal and external auditing of the books (The World Bank, 2006).

Continued Measures Taken to Improve Accountability and Transparency

Comprehensive external audit operational manuals and standards pertaining to financial, performance, control and fraud audit fulfilling international standards and practices were developed and implemented. Ethiopian Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants was issued in 2005 by the Office of the Auditor General (OFAG) although oversight of adherence to the code is constrained because of shortage of staff. The Federal Ethics and Anti-Corruption Commission (FEACC) in addition to its continuous conduct of popularization and sensitization programmes through the media, has as of recent months intensified its crack-down on offenders and has filed lawsuits against 405 public officials and managed to have over 100 of them sentenced to do time in jail ranging between 18 years and eight months. Regional EACC's are also taking tougher measures against corruption.

5.1.3 Challenges of Civil Service Reform in Ethiopia

In spite of the significant growth of the concept the civil service not all organizations embarking on civil service reform projects achieve their intended results. Civil Service rules by themselves will not lead to good governance if they are not backed by political will and the preparedness of government to impose total adherence to these rules to promote public good.

There are multiple challenges in every reform. However, to be successful in any reform process the organization should identify challenge and forward appropriate solution. Paulos in his study (2001), has identified the major challenges that faced during the process in the civil service reform. As he suggested possible solutions and achievements are not achieved without any challenge in CSR. Further, he argues that Organizational leaders, steering teams, redesign teams and change agents have passed through many challenges at different times and in different processes of the CSR. These are:

Misconceptions about civil service program or attitudinal problem:

Misconceptions and attitudinal problems include: not understanding civil service reform in its entire sense and attempts to restructure departments; weakness or unwillingness to sense and internalize the need for change; complacency with the status quo; relating civil service only with downsizing and turning once back to the concepts and empirical evidences. According to him, the framework of the civil service reform emphasized that the need for more attitudinal changes rather than reinforcing or strengthening the existing organizations, structures and methods. He argues that in Ethiopia the civil servant seems pessimistic about the whole reform process. In order to tackle these problems there should be necessary motivating measures such as competitive salary and benefit schemes for the civil service that hardly exist. If these preconditions are not fulfilled for the civil servant, one may wonder how the reform measures, especially in service delivery and ethics are going to be implemented. Ataklit(1996), in his finding, he mentioned that the objective of the civil service reform is not layoffs but to deliver public service in the right manner. In cases where the capabilities of some public servants do not fit the requirements of the new jobs, the government has promised to pay their salary until another job is found for them (with or without retraining); or until they find other jobs by themselves, or until they are trained and organized to start their own business (with financial accommodation by the government). For the aged civil servants, retirement is another option.

Absence consolidated bureaucratic structure with competent personnel:

According to Ataklit(1996), there is a serious problem or shortage of a professionally recruited and trained staff. The administrative performances in delivering public services are very poor which resulted from absence of

well-developed administrative system. But the whole civil service forced to move blindly from one to another end. To alleviate, he proposes that before implementing the whole concepts or elements of NPM there should be essential background work in capacity building and in other areas of administration.

Limited Commitment among Some Organizational Leaders (at early stages):

Lack of such commitments and poor communication has been revealed through: lack of adequate knowledge on the concepts of business process re-engineering (BPR); putting the change agenda aside or giving it as an assignment to others; not cooperating with the assigned change agents (consultants); not assigning the best people for reengineering teams; inadequate follow up and weak support. To overcome these obstacles, the leadership at Ministry of Capacity Building has made discussions with the top leadership of such organizations and reached at consensus. Such measure has improved the problem of what in most circumstances happen in public institutions.

Poor Communication:

The BPR framework requires communication with employees, customers and stakeholders throughout the various phases of the project cycle. Due to lack of formal communication (especially in the middle of the project), however, confusion and rumors among employees have been common in many public institutions.

5.1.4 Problems and Challenges of Ethiopian CSRP Implementation

A number of problems and challenges have been encountered during CSRP implementation among which the following are the major ones:

- ✦ Sustaining top leadership's commitment and ownership of the CSRP process.
- ✦ The delay in design and application of the Institutional Transformation Model and the resulting duplication of work that followed in BPR undertakings.
- ✦ Shortage of competent and committed professionals that could provide technical support to federal and regional civil service institutions.
- ✦ The delay in the completion of some critical reform studies which could support the speedy implementation of CSRP because of delays in consultancy procurement and lack of proper follow-up.
- ✦ The inability to adequately and effectively popularize the positive gains of the reform and countering covert and overt resistances to change because of serious constraints in information, education and communications (IEC) capacity and capability.
- ✦ Absence of accountability framework whereby institutional leadership could be held responsible rewarded for good performance and penalized for poor performance.

6. Conclusion

From the commencement of the implementation of civil service reform program in Ethiopia, the public service delivery reform objectives wanted to achieve efficiency and effectiveness, render better quality services and be accountable for its failure, produce committed citizen and to bring attitudinal change. The implementation of the civil service reform program covers a lot of things that will change public institutions in the provision of services. After the implementation of the service delivery reform changes have come in Ethiopia. Delay in service delivery has been reduced to certain extent and customers' satisfaction has improved. It is also important to note that changes in public service lack sustainability. This is because of the problem faced while implementing the program.

The civil services reform implementation in Ethiopian has faced different challenges at the beginning awareness creation is not well done by the responsible body which create confusion and misunderstanding about the reform. Not only this but also different challenges has become a bottleneck for successful implementation of the reform like Challenges related with the attitude of service provider and service seeker, Challenges related with qualification of civil servant, Limited commitment of the civil servants, Absence of well-developed bureaucracy and problems related with tools of implementation, Poor communication, Resistance to Change and etc.

Studies conducted in CSRP indicated that some of the reform successes registered in some selected organizations was attributed to the competence and dedication of their leadership. However, many of the organization leaders in the civil service were believed to have blurred view about the mission and goal of CSRP. Therefore, Ministry of Civil Service should work hard to take the advantage from the implementation of the program.

Finally it needs to be said that the problems in ministry of civil service require thorough diagnosis and sustained thought about the way to bring about attitudinal changes. The reform measures need to be executed incrementally through identifying priority areas in the light of the capacity to implement the measures.

7. Recommendation

In order to alleviate or reduce the problems the following recommendation are forwarded.

- ❖ Ministry of Civil Service should be concerned with the general human resource policies and designing

systems and organizational structure of government offices. This requires enhancing the human resource of the ministry with well qualified and well-paid organizational experts. Because knowledge obtained in academics becomes worthless unless it is supported by favorable working environment.

- ❖ Civil servant should be trained on regular basis. Such training should be deliberately planned, made compulsory and geared towards the achievement of specialization and professionalism.
- ❖ The appointment into civil service and promotion must be based on merit and qualification instead of political commitment alone and the civil service should be made attractive in all respects, and accorded greater recognition and responsibility.
- ❖ Civil servant should be motivated to stimulate them to contribute efforts, because individual productive capacity depends very largely on one's level of psychological satisfaction. This will increase the level of commitment, hard work, creativity and disposition among the civil servants. In addition to this it is important for the administration to strive to improve employees' remuneration and rewards to make them more committed.
- ❖ The government should ensure the existence of effective communication and coordination of reform activities. This should start from initiating reform goals and objectives and maintaining them in a sustainable manner both for reformers and those affected by the reform outcomes.

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