# The Implementation of Human Resource Management Reform Program and Practices of Professionalism in Selected Cities in Ethiopia

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## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine the implementation of human resource management reform sub-program and practices of professionalism in the civil service institutions of selected five cities in Ethiopia. Data for the study were collected from 498 civil servants selected by employing simple random sampling and analyzed featuring thematic analysis and descriptive statistics. The study revealed that implementation of the components of HRM reform varies across the sampled cities.   Mekelle and Hawassa cities are relatively in a better position followed by  Adama and Harar cities. However, Asossa city is far from implementing the HRM reform sub-program. On top of this, components of the reform such as human resource planning, performance appraisal, recruitment and selection, remuneration and benefit packages have not been successfully implemented. Concerning the practices of professionalism, some improvements have been found in some areas such as competency of the civil servants, ethics and courtesy as well as compliance with the civil service law. However, a high level of affiliation of the civil servants with the ruling party  together with political interference in the promotion, recruitment and selection of civil servants have been identified  in this study. Therefore, it is recommended that the national, regional and local governments of Ethiopia should limit politicization of the civil service and show its genuine commitment for the implementation and enhancement of merit system and neutrality. Furthermore, the government needs to reconsider the threshold of tax exemption and to undertake family budget survey for decisions on the civil servants' salary scale.

Keywords: Human Resource Reform, Professionalism, Civil Service, Ethiopia

## 1. Introduction

The origin of the civil service dates back to 3000 B.C, i.e. to the heydays of the ancient Egyptian civilization (Das 1998). In the nineteenth century, industrialized countries were engaged in professionalizing the civil service through civil service reform programs to curb the challenges like inefficiency and ineffectiveness, lack of the required knowledge, skill and attitude, nepotism,

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scandals, and corruption from which the civil service had been suffering from (ibid). In Africa, the issue of civil service reform and professionalism emerged mainly in the years that followed immediately after the independence of many African nations .It was highly influenced by the single party, and as a result, - the civil service created was inefficient and ineffective. The civil servants' poor performance made the African civil service subject to continuous reform since the 1970s and still they are the objects of reform in the governance structure of Africa because the civil service is unprofessional and has failed to meet public expectations (Bertucci 1998).

Promoting professionalism in the civil service has become a central agenda for - governments, which are dedicated and committed to serving the country and the public interest. The assumption is that- it is only through a professional civil service system that governments can reach out for the public and successfully implement their development policies and strategies - (Klingner and Nalbandian 1993). Professionalized civil service institutions within a country are the guarantee for effective and efficient utilization of scares resources, quality service delivery and customers' satisfaction (meeting citizens' expectations) and insuring over all national sustainable development (Adebabay 2011).

The beginning of modern civil service in Ethiopia dates back to 1907 when Emperor Menelik II initiated the formation of few ministers. Later Emperor Haileselassie I introduced various reform measures in modernizing public administration and in the appointment of salaried and educated personnel in the civil service based on the criteria of loyalty to the monarch and their family status rather than merit (Tilaye 2007). The *derg* (1974-1991) continued the centralization policy of the Emperor and seriously affected the development and professionalism of the civil service (Tilaye 2007). Generally, the civil service during the three regimes was not a neutral policy implementer, responsive to the peoples' interests, impartial, transparent, and accountable; among others, the civil service, as an institution was not professional and loyal to the public.

After the downfall of the Derg regime (since 1991), the current Government of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia has been taking some encouraging initiatives and reforms in economic, political and socio-cultural aspects against unprofessional, undemocratic and backward systems of the civil service in the past regimes. Among these - are the Civil Service Reform Program (CSRP) in general and the Human Resource Management (HRM) Reform Sub-Program in particular?

The rationale behind reforming and professionalizing the civil service is to retain competent, effective and efficient, innovative civil servants acquainted with the desired standards of knowledge, skill and attitude to serve the public interests impartially and in an ethical manner. Some of the pillars of HRM Reform programs relevant to promote civil service professionalism include using the principle of merit as a criterion for the recruitment, selection, performance evaluation, promotion and professional advancement of civil servants, effective human resource training and development functions, flourishing ethical principles and accountability in the civil service (Adebabay 2011).

However, in this regard, -the Ethiopian civil service system is still facing complicated problems. The international anti-corruption watchdog, Transparency International, -ranked countries' corruptions index for the year 2014. The Corruption Perceptions Index ranks countries based on how corrupt their public sector is perceived to be. A country's score indicates the perceived level of public sector corruption on a scale of 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean). A poor score is likely a sign of widespread bribery, lack of punishment for corruption and public institutions that do not respond to citizens' needs. In this regard, Ethiopia was placed 110th (out of 175 countries) with 33% total score. Accordingly, Ethiopia's score is close to zero, implying

that the country is among highly corrupted countries (Transparency international, 2014). The above scenario leads to the question, "how was the implementation of the Human Resource Management Reform program and Civil Service professionalism as a result of the reform program initiated in Ethiopia?" Therefore, this research examined the implementation of HRM reform program initiated by the incumbent government and civil service professionalism in selected cities of Ethiopia.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Theoretical Literature Review

According to Verheijen (1998, pp. 4-6) there are different models used for the reform of public management or public administration. The author identified three models-: radical reform, incremental reform1 and moderate managerialism. Among the radical reform is the 'New Public Management (NPM). This model has been used to analyze the implementation of the human resource reform sub-program in Ethiopia. As for Massy (1997), the term 'New Public Management' is used as shorthand for many of the new trends or reforms in public administration. The term is common in many European countries and is popularly employed to explain attempts to redefine administrative culture and structures in government. In USA, although the term NPM is not current, similar terms such as 'reinventing government' and 'post bureaucratic reform paradigm' are often used (Paulos 2001).

'New Public Management' is a strong intellectual pattern based on Public Choice theory and Agency theory and shows that it has different causes and elements (Paulos 2001). The first cause is considered to be a shortcoming- of public sector administration and, hence, the need for a wholesale adoption of private sector values such as 'risk-taking', 'customer focuses' and 'bottom-line orientation' (Larson 1987, PP 131). Others have pointed out that the assumption behind NPM is that private management is superior to public management; therefore, private sector techniques should be 'imported' into public administration (Shand 1996; Larbi 1999 -as cited in Paulos 2001). The second major force seems to be the need to overcome the inefficiency and ineffectiveness caused by traditional massive bureaucracies, the functionally organized agencies and the central planning approaches which predominated from the 1950s to the late 1970s (Kaul 1997 as quoted in Paulos 2001).

The third major cause for NPM revolves around the role of government. NPM proclaims that the preferred role of government should be changed from acting as the principal vehicle for socio-economic development to that of guiding and facilitating that development (Kaul 1997 as cited in Paulos 2001). It is also argued that government should move from a concern 'to do' towards a concern 'to ensure that things are done'.

The fourth major impetus for NPM is the need to have a decentralized management. Here the major areas of emphasis are breaking up the huge public bureaucracies into more autonomous business units or executive agencies, and giving managers increased control over budgets for which they are accountable. It also involves 'de-layering' of vertically integrated organizations (replacing traditional tall structures with flatter and more responsive structures); downsizing or rationalizing and trimming the public sector in order to achieve 'leaner' (small and compact) and 'meaner' (cost-effective) public service; divorcing the provision from the production of public services; adopting new forms of corporate governance, and moving to a board of directors model in the public service (Larbi 1999, cited in Paulos 2001).

## 2.2 Historical Background of Civil Service (Reform)

Nowadays any form of government cannot function without some form of civil service. The phrase civil service/servant was used in the late eighteenth century to distinguish the covenanted civilian employees of the East India Company through which India was governed by military personnel (Stanley 1998). In contemporary public administration, civil service reforms (CSR) and modernization are considered primarily in terms of efficient and effective responses-of institutions to changing needs and circumstances.

Whether in developed or developing countries, few success stories exist in the field of CSR. The leaders of developing countries in particular face tremendous hurdles in prioritizing and implementing programs. During the last two decades, most civil service reforms (CSR) have been associated with movements towards democracy and economic reform efforts. Between 1981 and 1991, CSR in 44 developing countries was supported by 90 World Bank lending operations, which comprised 60 structural adjustment loans and 30 technical assistance loans (UN 2011). They have taken place in developed countries (for example New Zealand and United Kingdom), as well as in rapidly modernizing nations such as Chile, Malaysia, and Singapore. African civil services as well as other components of the public service were created in colonial period and patterned after the models of the colonizing power (Walle, 2003). The poor fit between expectations and actual performance has made them perpetual objectives of reform in the post independence era in most countries. Civil service reform (CSR) was, thus, a part of the program of rolling back the state (Ibid).

## 2.3 Human Resource Management Reform Sub-Program

The Human Resource Management (HRM) component of the Civil Service Reform Program (CSRP) in Ethiopia has been initiated in 1996, after the task force study came-up with several problems and made recommendations that were to be implemented under the overall guidance of the Federal Civil Service Agency -FCSA- FCSA (AH Consulting, 2010).

The major aim of the program is to modernize the human resource management in the civil service so as to develop an effective and efficient civil service. The sub-program, by the year 2000/1, was said to have developed the following: a refined system for administering the employees of the civil service institutions in a just and equitable manner; a system of pay and promotion which is directly related to merit/performance; an effective system which allows the development of a human resource- plan so as to implement government policies and priorities; comprehensive and uniform rules and regulations for managing the human resources of the civil service and an adequate number of knowledgeable and capable employees in the civil service.

The HRMRP component was designed to manage civil servants in a fair, open and efficient manner, while focusing on achieving the functions of the government, satisfying the requirements of internal and external customers. Moreover, it was expected that it would take proper account of the needs of employees as individuals and as groups, and achieve the planned objectives through the design, testing, development, documentation, user training, implementation, maintenance, review and development of policies, systems and procedures that cover federal and regional civil servants.

## 2.4 Civil Service Professionalism

The term civil service is explained as a branch of governmental service in which individuals are employed and retained on the basis of professional merit as proven by competitive examinations (OECD 1997). A civil service professionalism is defined as "the overall practices and values that guide the civil service-loyalty, neutrality, transparency, diligence, punctuality, effectiveness and efficiency, impartiality, accountability and others, which are specific to individual country" (United Nations 2000). Moreover, professionalism can be strengthened, promoted, and insured in the civil service mainly through enforcing merit principles in career system-merit based recruitment, selection, promotion, thereby maintaining neutrality of the civil service and/or civil servants-; enhancing civil servants' competence and excellence through mechanisms like training, and insuring system of accountability in the civil service and effectively utilizing the existing opportunities (Gottfried 1988).

## 2.5 Achievement and Limitations of the Civil Service Reform Program in Ethiopia

Since the inception of the CSRP these days in Ethiopia, a number of achievements have been envisaged. The establishment of a legal framework which defines the scope of the civil service is -a case in point. According to Tilaye (2007), other achievements of administrative reform in general and CSRP in particular in Ethiopia include decentralization and devolution of powers to regions; establishment of civil service institutions; reorganization of line departments; development of various policies and directives; introduction of progressive management tools; massive training opportunities for civil servants; awareness creation and increasing demand for accountability; improved service delivery and increased level of customer satisfaction; creating the pressure and momentum for change.

Unlike these achievements of the CSRP, there are some weaknesses in the implementation of the reform program. These include attitudinal problems on the side of the civil servant, shortage of competent civil servants, lack of clear direction and commitment among organizational leaders, a limited level of public participation, problems of accountability, and partisanship of the civil servant. Hence, this calls for a merit system; neutrality of the civil service/servants; and a system of accountability in the civil service.

## 2.6 Research Gaps

Based on the theoretical and empirical literature review presented above, certain research gaps have been identified. The literature shows there are many ways in which countries can reform their civil service and ensure professionalism in the civil service. However, these measures and efforts are dissimilar in different countries. Thus, without examining the local context, drawing conclusions and making recommendations based on research outputs conducted somewhere else may lead to wrong decisions in the context of Ethiopia. Most of the aforementioned studies focused on providing western model of civil service as prescription for developed countries and they were done mostly at a continental or a national level. Nonetheless, in the Ethiopian context, there are limited research outputs focused on examining the achievements of the implementation of Human Resource Management Reform Sub-program and civil service professionalism at a national level. It appears that there is no- single study -conducted on the assessment of HRM reform sub-program implementation and civil service professionalism in the civil service of the cities selected for  this study.

Thus, the practical achievements of the HRM reform sub-program and the status of civil service professionalism in the study areas (in its local context) need to be well researched and known. This shows the existence of research gaps which are worth studying. Therefore, this study is conducted to fill these and related gaps by assessing the implementation and achievement of the HRM reform sub-program and professionalism in the civil service.

## 3. The Methods

### 3.1 Research Design and Methods

This study features a descriptive type of research design that is usually considered appropriate to answer "WH" questions, "how, what, why, whom, whose, where, and when" questions and to describe the nature or current situations of an event or a problem in detail based on opinions, attitudes or practices that are observed or measured at a given time and environment (Kothari 2004). The researchers used a mixed method and a concurrent triangulation approach both qualitative and quantitative research methods (ibid 2004).

### 3.2 Population and Sampling Design

In order to scale up the validity of samples of the study, the researchers employed both probability and non-probability sampling techniques.

### 3.2.1 Population of the Study

The population of this study constituted of two target groups: (a) all the offices of the city administration governed by civil service proclamation-there were (20 offices in each city); and (b) all permanent civil servants working in each of these offices.

### 3.2.2 Sampling Techniques

Initially, the researchers used purposive sampling to select the five city administrations in Ethiopia since , as big cities, they are currently considered, more or less and compared to other cities and towns, with well-established government institutional facilities. Then, representative offices were selected from all the offices in the selected cities through a simple random sampling technique the lottery method.

### 3.2.3 Sample Size

According to Gay (1981), for descriptive research type, a sample of 10% of the population is considered to be a minimum sample size for a larger population, and for a smaller population, 20% can be required. In this study, the researchers used a sample of 30% of the total bureaus found in the selected five cities to conduct the study (Hawasa, Adama, Harar, Assossa and Mekele). Six offices were selected from the total of 20 offices available in each city. After having identified the target bureaus randomly, the permanent employees in the selected six offices were totaled, and then, the researchers applied the following formula to find representative sample size from the permanent civil servants working in offices. According to Glenn (2009), the following formula was used to determine the sample size, which is reliable when the population size is known.

$$n = \frac{z^2 Pq}{e^2}$$

Where, n= sample size, e= level of precision (4%), p= the 50% proportion of population who responded agreement while q is the 50% proportion of population who responded disagreement. Thus, for a sample size of 600 respondents, 120 respondents were selected-from each of the five city administrations.

### 3.3. Data Collection and Analysis Methods

For data collection, a questionnaire, and a semi structured interview were employed.  All copies of the questionnaire were collected and interviews were successfully held with the interviewees. Then, the data gathered were presented in tables and graphs thereby featuring per cent ages of figures drawn on SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Furthermore, thematic analysis was employed to shed some light on the data presented.

### 4. Results and Discussions

The analysis of data was made on the basis of data collected from 498 respondents. The analysis and discussion in this section mainly addresses two most important issues. The first issue is the implementation of components of human resource management reform sub-program, and the second one is about practices of professionalism in the civil service institutions.

### 4.1 Implementation of HRM Reform Sub-program in Civil Service Institutions

The HRM reform component was designed to manage civil servants in a fair, open and efficient manner, while focusing on achieving the goals of the government and satisfying the requirements of internal and external clients. In this regard, implementation of the components of HRM reform in selected sample cites of Ethiopia has been presented as follows.

### 4.1.1 Human Resource Planning

The purpose of developing human resource planning is to asses where the institution is, where it is going, and what implications these assessments have on future supplies and demands of the human resource.  Therefore, attempts must be made to match supplies and demands of human resource by making them compatible with the achievement of the institutions' future needs (Mondy & Noe 1990).  In this regard, Figure 1 presents the views of civil servant respondents in the selected sample cities.

As indicated in Figure 1, the majority of the respondents in all sampled cities agreed that their institutions have experiences of preparing and using human resource planning (HRP). Pearson chi-square test of *14.949* with p-value of *0.060* indicates that there is a significant difference among the cities. The above response implies that there is uneven practice of preparing and using HRP in the civil services of the sampled cities. The interviewed officials also expressed that there are no well-organized practices of HRP system in the civil service offices. The key informants of all selected cities during interview expressed that the practices of HR sections under each department/office prepare their respective HRP and submit for final compilation to the civil service office.
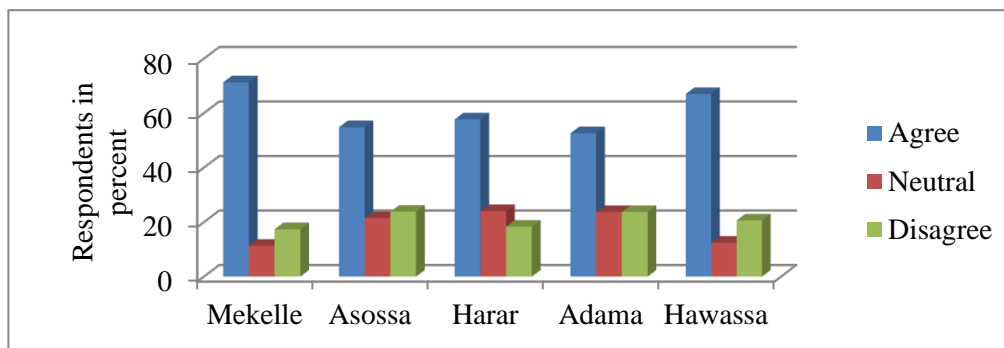
*Source:* Field Survey, June-July, 2015

**Figure 1** Respondents' View on Preparing and Using - Human Resource Planning

In city like Asossa, the civil service office has not yet been established by itself let alone doing HRP for different offices of the city. This could result in unplanned human resource recruitment and creates vacant positions for a long period.

### 4.1.2 Recruitment and Selection Process in Civil Service Institutions

According to Baruch (2004), recruitment refers to the first stages in the process of filling vacancies in an institution by inviting applicants from internal or external sources. In this regard, Table 2 below shows views of respondents towards the invitation of recruitment advertisement of their respective institutions for qualified internal and external applicants.

**Table 1:** Invitation of Recruitment Advertisement for Qualified Internal &External Applicants

| Research sites | Agree | Neutral | Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mekelle | 81.7 | 7.8 | 10.4 |
| Asossa | 47.0 | 20.5 | 32.5 |
| Harar | 56.7 | 23.1 | 20.2 |
| Adama | 48.0 | 28.5 | 23.5 |
| Hawassa | 72.9 | 11.5 | 15.6 |

*Source:* Field Survey, June-July, 2015

Table 1 shows that the majority of the respondents or 817%, 72.9% and 56.7% from Mekelle, Hawassa and Harar cities respectively agreed on the invitation of qualified internal and external potential applicants to fill vacant positions through recruitment advertisement in their institutions. However, more respondents from Asossa and Adama cities reported disagreement and/or uncertainty of this process. This may indicate lack of transparency in civil service institutions of these cities in announcing vacant positions to attract potential applicants from both internal and external sources. Concerning the fair and equitable treatment of both internal and external applicants during the recruitment process, an interview held with key informants confirmed lack of fairness and equitability that could be due to some especial considerations and provision of direction by politicians, nepotism and other relationships during recruitment and selection process. For instance, one key informant from Asossa city reported that there is a trend to give 5% extra value to native applicants during an examination conducted to select - applicants. The study also assessed the presence of vacant positions for a long span of time in the civil service institutions of the selected cities, and the key informants during interview confirmed

that there was a tendency in all surveyed cities to withhold vacant positions for a long time. This may create burden to existing employees and could result in inefficiency in provision of services for their clients. Furthermore, respondents shared their views in regard to the practices of selecting candidates who applied for vacant positions with the use of objective criteria. In this regard, Figure 2 summarizes the views of respondents in their respective institutions.
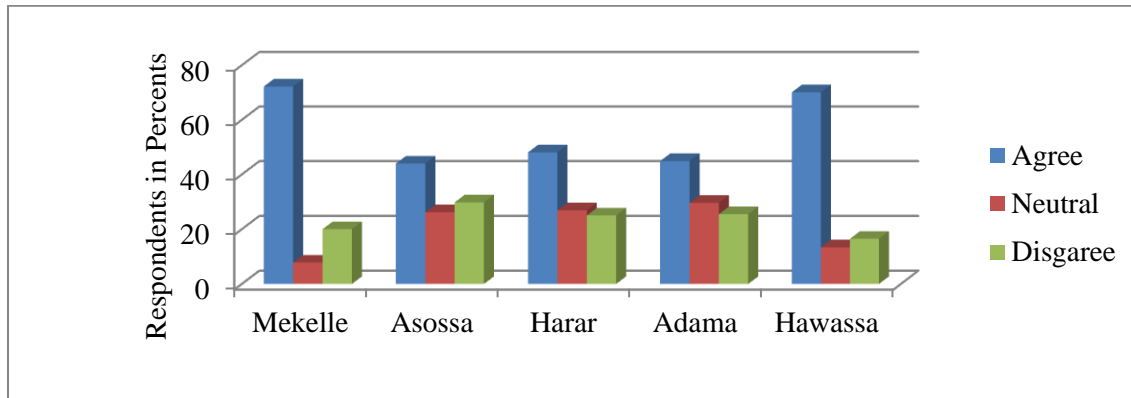


*Source:* Field Survey, June-July, 2015

**Figure 2** Selections of Competent Applicants Using Objective Criteria

Concerning the question on   whether or not the institutions use objective criteria to select competent appliacnts for vacant positions, the majority (86%) of the respondents from the cities of Mekelle and Hawassa reported agreement. In addition, relatively more (43%) respondents from the cities of Harar, Adama and Assosa also expressed their agreement; though some other reported disgreement. From this, it is possible to infer that though most civil service institutions from the selected cities use objective criteria in the process of applicants selection, it still requires more commitments to narrow the existing gaps.

### 4.1.3 Human Resource Development (HRD)

Human resource development is about two things: training (helping employees do their present jobs) and development -helping managers handle future responsibilities- (Scarpello, Vida & Ledvinka, 1998). In this regard, the key informant (the head of the civil service and other officials) particularly in Adama, Hawassa, Asossa and Harar reported that the civil services do not have clear policy in regard to HRD. In an attempt to build the capacity of the civil servants, the interview respondents said, demand for training is usually initiated at the top level and forwarded for its implementation – down to the ladder. Sometimes, the city administration shall decide on the knowledge gaps for which the civil servants are expected to be trained. This is mostly true in the case of BPR, BSC and other important reform implementation tools.  Hence, lack of clear policy direction at the city level could be among the hindrances to properly build the capacity of the civil servants. This makes institutions unable to send their employees for training which could fill the right skill gap. Furthermore, the researchers asked views of the respondents about whether or not their respective institutions granted them chances of training-. The following table presents the views of respondents.

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**Table 2:** Provision of Training to the Civil Servants

| Research sites | Agree | Neutral | Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mekelle | 53.9% | 19.1% | 27.0% |
| Assosa | 28.6% | 21.4% | 50.0% |
| Harar | 38.8% | 33.0% | 28.2% |
| Adama | 39.8% | 24.5% | 35.7% |
| Hawassa | 54.6% | 16.5% | 28.9% |

*Source:* Field Survey, June-July, 2015

Table 2 indicates that more than half of the respondents in Mekele (53.9%) and Hawassa (54.6%) agreed that they -got trainings. On the other hand, only 28.8%, 38.8% and 39.8% of the respondents in Asossa, Harar and Adama respectively agreed that their institution had offered trainings to them. Surprisingly, 50% of the respondents in Asossa replied that their institution did not provide them with any training. This implies that the provision of training to civil servants is not consistent across the sampled cities and the gaps continue to exist as compared to the objective of the HRM reform program unless necessary measures are taken.

### 4.1.4 Human Resource Management Information System

The significance of human resource information system (HRMIS) in managing and disseminating information on human resource depends on benefits associated with the capability to guide management in tracking and improving the level of human resource activities across the civil services. In this regard, the interview responses and document analyses have shown that except the civil service institution in Mekele city, all other sampled cities had not - developed a well-organized human resource management information system. This implies that cities do not follow a uniform system for managing the human resource which is useful for systematic management and dissemination of information in the execution of human resource functions like planning, training and development, and recruitment in the institutions.

### 4.1.5 Civil Service Law and Grievance System and Procedure

The civil service law, -grievance handling systems and procedures were part of the HRM reform projects that were widely implemented within the federal, regional and woreda levels. Under this project, a proclamation was developed (The Federal Civil Servants Proclamation No 515/2007). The proclamation provides rules, regulations and guidelines for human resource functions. The regions also set their own civil servant proclamation based on the civil service proclamation. In this regard, table 3 depicts that the absolute majority of the respondents in the entire sampled cities have information on the issue. At its face value, awareness of the civil servants about the existence of the law is vital.
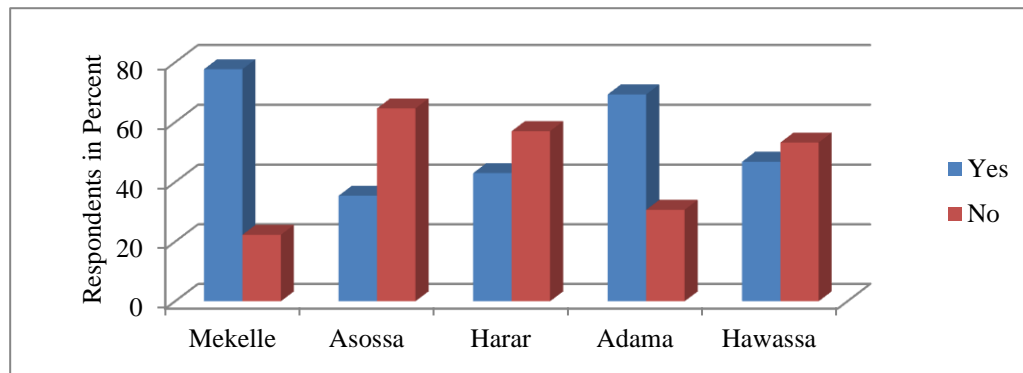
*Source:* Field survey, June-July, 2015
*Figure 3:* Communications through the Contents and Objectives of the Civil Service Law

Asked whether or not their respective institutions had communicated to them the objectives of Civil Service law, the respondents provided the following data. Figure 3 shows that more than half of the respondents in Adama and Mekele (69.3% and 76.3% respectively) reported that they knew the presence of the law. On the other hand, more than half of the respondents in Asossa (63.6%), Harar (57%) and Hawassa (50.8%) replied that they did not know even its presence. From this it is possible to realize that the civil servants' understanding of the civil service law was found to be low and/or medium. This implies that the mere existence of the civil service law is not sufficient by itself.  Rather, proper communication of the law to the concerned stakeholders/civil servants is indispensable as it can improve the awareness level of the civil servants regarding their rights and duties. Regarding the grievance handling system and procedure, table 3 below summarizes the views of the respondents.

**Table 3:** Appealing of Compliant

| Cities | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Mekelle | 22.1% | 77.9% |
| Assosa | 34.5% | 64.3% |
| Harar | 43.3% | 56.7% |
| Adama | 44.3% | 55.7% |
| Hawassa | 34.4% | 63.3% |

*Source:* Field Survey, June-July, 2015

It is natural that employees submit complaints to a concerned individual(s) or office(s) thereby expressing their dissatisfaction and demanding correction. In this regard, the researcher asked whether or not the respondents had presented their complaints. Table 3 shows that more than half of the respondents in all the selected cities had not submitted any complaints. This appears to imply that the civil servants had a low level of courage to claim their rights or a low level of awareness of their rights and obligations as regards the civil service law.

### 4.1.6 Performance Appraisal and Time Management in Civil Service Institutions

Performance appraisal refers to the formal system of appraisal, in which an individual is compared with others and ranked or rated. It is undertaken by supervisors, subordinates, co-workers and the like once or twice a year to differentiate the best performers from the poor ones

in their respective duties and responsibilities. Concerning this, table 4 presents the perception of the respondents concerning performance appraisal practices.

**Table 4:** Implementation of Employees' Performance Appraisal

| Items | Agree | Disagree | Neutral |
|---|---|---|---|
| Existence of periodic evaluation of employees' performance. | 64.5 | 17.5 | 18.0 |
| The current evaluation system helps to differentiate good performers from poor performer counterparts | 49.0 | 31.3 | 19.7 |
| Execution of BSC as a tool to measure the performance. | 54.2 | 27.7 | 18.1 |

*Source:* Field Survey, June-July, 2015

Table 4 indicates that 64.5% of the respondents agreed on the existence of periodic employees' performance appraisal system in their institutions. However, 17.5% and 18 % reported disagreement and neutrality respectively. This shows that though there is periodic employees' performance evaluation system in most institutions, there are still some institutions that are not periodically executing the system. Regarding whether or not the current evaluation system is helpful to differentiate good performers from the poor one's, 49% expressed their agreement whereas 31.3% and 19.7 percent disagreed and remained neutral respectively. From this, one can grasp that though the current appraisal system is helping the civil service institutions to distinguish employees with a good performance from those with a poor performance, there is a gap demanding further improvement efforts.

### 4.1.7 Remuneration and Conditions of Services

According to Baruch (2004), remuneration refers to wages, salaries, overtime payments, bonuses, allowances, insurances, commissions and any other financial reward- paid to employees in return for the work they perform for their employers. Different employees of the same institution might be remunerated through different systems on the basis of the type of work they perform and contribution they make to their institution. Under the Human Resource Management Reform sub-program, remuneration has been considered as a component of efforts of motivating employees - in the institution. The manual of this program indicates the types of compensation and benefits like health insurance, transportation, different forms of leave with and without salary, per-diem, transportation and loading payment, disturbance allowances, weather condition related allowances, part-time payment, etc. However, much focus was given to salary scale improvement which is still incomparable with the scale in private sectors and other public sector institutions like public enterprises. Regarding the salary scale improvement, the government has made 33% - 46% of salary increment for civil servants since July 8, 2014 with a minimum salary scale of 582 Birr and a maximum of 5781Birr. There are also other packages like allowances, overtime payment, bonuses, insurances, career payment, per-diem, etc. which are applied variably among institutions due to factors like nature of the employees' jobs, leadership commitment, weather condition, position, etc. In relation to this, figure 4 presents a summary of respondents' views on the type of remuneration provided in selected civil service institutions of the five sampled city administrations.
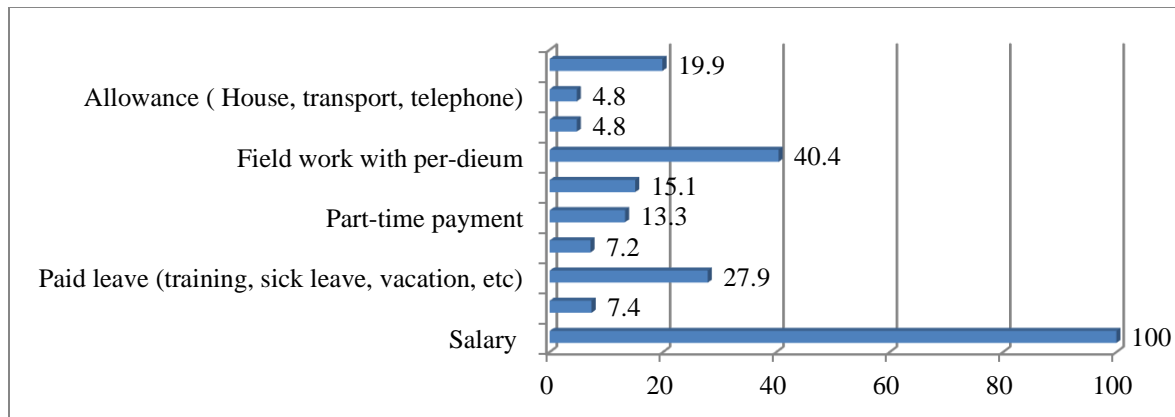
**Figure 4:** Remuneration  and Benefit Packages Applied in the Civil Service Institutions

Figure 4 shows that the remuneration and benefit package in the civil service institutions is mostly limited to salary. Among the respondents, few (40.4%) respondents indicated that they received benefits like field work with per-diem (40.4%), paid leave (27.9%), long term loan (15.1%), part-time payment (13.3%), bonus (7.2%), insurance (7.4%), and allowance (4.8%). This implies that the remuneration and benefit packages in the civil service institutions do not motivate employees to do tasks in their respective positions which need- further due attention particularly from the government.

The Human Resource Management system reform sub-program manual (2001) states that one of the conditions in which employees' salary is determined is the existing market condition that could allow them to cope with the cost of living. In addition, the manual indicates that the minimum scale of salary should be the "living wage" that guarantees the survival of employees. However, in Ethiopia the system of determining one's salary is mostly biased since it is limited to the paying capacity of the government and undermines the condition of the existing market in which employees are not able to deal with the payment made to them. For instance, the manual of Human Resource Management Reform Sub-program shows that for determination of the minimum salary scale in the civil service institutions, one of the methods to be used is a "family budget survey." In this method, an employee with five family members and who gets paid as per the existing minimum salary scale is involved in the survey-and is asked to suggest a minimum salary scale which has not yet been considered in a country.

Indeed, the lowest salary scale (582-Birr) of civil servants cannot allow them to survive unless it is supplemented with other benefit packages.  It is subject to taxation and the tax exemption threshold is 150 Birr. Therefore, civil servants are liable to pay (580 –150 Br) * 10% = 43 Birr (tax payment) + 30 Birr (Pension contribution), a total of 73 Birr. Thus, the net monthly income of these civil servants is to be 582 -73 Birr = 509 Birr which is far less than the poverty line of $1 per day and  1500 Birr of house allowances for senior officials. The taxation system of the country tends to ignore civil servants with the lowest salary scale. This certainly disappoints civil servants and it can trigger a high level of dissatisfaction and discouragement of the employees to exert their efforts in their work places.

## 4.2 Practices of Professionalism in Civil Service Institutions

Professionalism in the civil service is an overarching value that determines how its activities are carried out. It encompasses all other values that guide the public service such as loyalty, neutrality, transparency, diligence, punctuality, effectiveness, impartiality, and other values that may be specific to individual countries. Ethics in the public service is broad and is related to norms dictating how public servants should deal with judgment and discretion in carrying out their official duties. These values and norms are better reinforced if there is a system of administrative policies, management practices, and oversight agents that provide incentives and penalties to encourage civil servants to professionally carry out their duties and observe high standards of conduct (UN, 2000).The assessment conducted in this study on practices of professionalism in civil service institutions has been discussed as follows.

### 4.2.1 Political Neutrality, Recruitment and Accountability in Civil Service Institutions

According to Gottfried (1988), for professionalism to thrive in the civil service system, the civil service and the civil servants need to be autonomous and politically neutral. This is because civil servants are supposed to serve the government and the public in general in a neutral and impartial manner. When the neutrality of the civil servants is deteriorated, the reform efforts cannot be successful. In this case, the views of respondents regarding the neutrality, merit system, capability of the civil service and/or servants, accountability and impartiality in the sampled cities was assessed and summarized in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Civil Servants' Level of Agreement- on Political Neutrality and Political Interferences

| Items | Agree | Neutral | Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|
| Civil servants are politically neutral policy implementers in your office | 58 | 17 | 25 |
| Politicians interfere and influence the daily duties of the civil servants in the institutions | 39.8 | 19.4 | 40.8 |
| Recruitment and selection of employees done on merit basis | 53.2 | 23.1 | 23.7 |
| Civil servants are promoted on merit basis | 49.6 | 21.3 | 29.1 |
| Civil servants are capable and skillful to perform their task and to serve their customers | 55.6 | 23.3 | 21.1 |
| There is a system of employees' accountability in the civil Service | 63.5 | 17.9 | 18.6 |
| There is discrimination based on gender, race, etc during service provision in the office | 34.9 | 18.3 | 46.8 |

*Source:* Field Survey, June-July, 2015

As it is illustrated in table 5, 58% of the respondents chose "Agree", while 25% opted for "Disagree" concerning the idea that civil servants in the study cities are politically neutral policy implementers. Though the study shows that majority of civil servants are politically neutral policy implementers, a considerable number of some disagreement. Hence, although the political neutrality of the civil servants is promising, still there is a gap that requires attention in the future in order to enhance professionalism in the civil service. The neutrality of the civil service is related to and determined by the level of interference of the political appointees in

daily activities of professional civil servants. Such kinds of interference could result in wrong decisions and may cause- inefficiency, ineffectiveness and inequity in the civil service institutions. The tabular data above also illustrates that the majority of the respondents (53.2%) from all selected cities agreed that employees' recruitment and selection was  carried out on merit basis according to the civil service employment proclamation though other respondents (23.7%) disclosed their disagreement on the issue.

Furthermore, as noted in Table 5, the majority of the respondents (63.5%) from all the sampled cities "Agreed" that there is a system of accountability for every employee's action. The rest (17.9%) remained neutral, while 18.7% of them disagreed. Thus, these results demonstrate relatively good system of accountability in the sampled civil service institutions and this could promote professionalism in the future. Regarding whether or not there is discrimination during service provision, 46.8% of the respondents from the sampled cities disagreed on the presence of discrimination during service provision, where as 34.9% of them agreed. Therefore, this implies that the civil services in the sampled cities seem performing well in accommodating diversity in service provision for the public. However, still there is a gap which requires further action for enhancing professionalism.

### 4.2.2 Compliance with Civil Service Laws, Rules and Regulations of the Civil Service

Civil service laws, rules and regulations are statements to shape the behavior of the employees, and directed towards efforts made to mobilize or manage resources in the civil service. These broad guidelines play significant roles in implementing the civil service reform programs and creating the kind of civil professional service system. However, written documents by themselves do not bring about meaningful results. Thus, every employee-manager or non-manager has to comply with these laws and regulations. As regards this point, views of the respondents have been summed up in Figure 4.5.
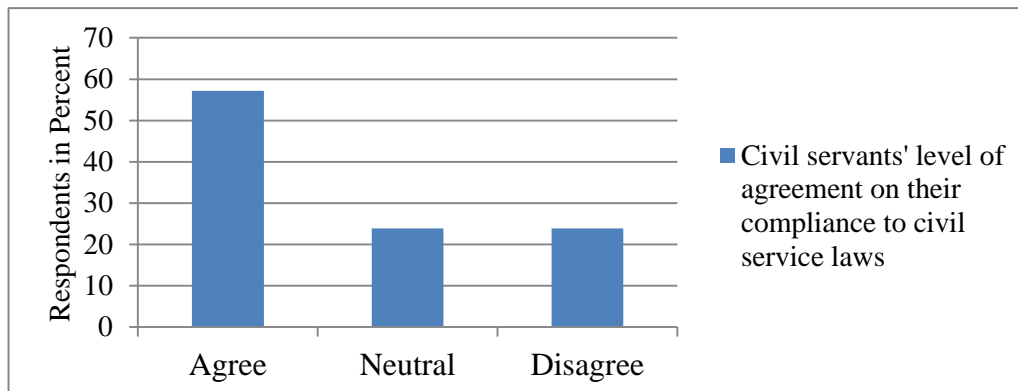


*Source,* Field Survey, 2015
**Figure 5** Respondents Level of Agreement on Compliance to Civil Service Laws

The respondents were asked to express their opinions about whether or not service providers perform their duties by respecting the civil service law in their institutions. As can be seen in figure 4.5, 57.2% of the respondents agreed with the issue. However, 23.9% and 18.9% of them remained neutral and disagreed respectively. Although the findings show a promising current practice of employees as regards respecting the law, rules and regulations; more attention needs

to be given to further promote professionalism in the civil service institutions through a deep-rooted research on the specifics.

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusions

The main objective of this study was to examine the implementation of HRM reform sub-program and professionalism in selected civil service institutions. To this end, five city administrations in Ethiopia were selected and their implementation of HRM reform sub-program and the practices of civil service professionalism were assessed. Regarding the implementation of the components of HRM reform, the study revealed that it varies across the cities. Whereas Mekelle and Hawassa cities are relatively in a better position; they are followed by Adama and Harar cities. However, Asossa city is far from implementing the HRM reform sub-program due to the fact that the city administration has not yet established a civil service office which is expected to coordinate implementation of the reform. With all its problems, except Asossa city, other sampled cities seem to be in progress. However, components of the reform such as human resource planning, performance appraisal, recruitment and selection, remuneration and benefit packages have not been successfully implemented as they had been planned in the reform sub-program. Considering the practices of professionalism in the civil service institutions, there is improvement in the competency, impartiality and accountability of the civil servants which comply with the civil service law. However, as the absolute majority of the civil servants- are affiliated with the ruling party-, political interference in decisions on promotion, recruitment and selection is a chronic challenge that could deter the sustainability of the civil service professionalism.

### 5.2 Recommendations

In order to curb the limitations related to the implementation of HRM reform sub-program and professionalism practices in the civil service institutions, the researchers have made the following recommendations:

- Human resources are vital for the successful implementation of the HRM reform in the civil service institutions. Therefore, particular attention should be given to bring about positive changes in the life style of the civil servants by designing adequate employees' packages like compensation and benefits, training and social support-.
- Almost all employees from all research sites reported that their salary did not help them to cope with the unbearable cost of life. Therefore, it is very important to reconsider the threshold of tax exemption and to undertake a family budget survey prior to the minimum salary scale of civil servants as stated in the manual of HRM reform.
- The large number of party membership and political interference and limited professionalism in the civil service institutions is very likely to deter sustainability of the civil service. Therefore, the national, regional and local governments of Ethiopia should be highly committed to promoting professionalism through stakeholders' concerted effort of ensuring neutrality, merit management, system of accountability and impartiality.

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