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# The Quest for Professional Civil Service in Ethiopia: Practices and Challenges

**Henok Seyoum Assefa**

*The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, Policy Study and Research Center*  
[henokseyoum321@gmail.com](mailto:henokseyoum321@gmail.com)

## ABSTRACT

*Professionalism in the civil service is an overarching value that determines how its activities will be 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 a given country. The rationale behind professionalism is that public servants should be neutral, impartial, fair, and competent and serve the public interest in carrying out their duties. They should be top people who are fairly compensated and adequately trained to perform their work.*

*Among others, historical and ideological realities; lack of real recruitment procedures and conditions ; Competition from private sector and others which resulted in limited stock of qualified people in specialized areas specific to the public sector; absence of or abuse of objective and uniform standard of appraisal and results-based reward system; limited awareness and practical skills among some leaders, managers and team leaders to support their subordinates in their professional development; weak linkage of human resource development activities with the strategy and inadequate budget allocation to human resource development; and negative attitude and resistance to change among civil servants and even sometimes the middle and top level leaders are found to be the challenges in creating professional public service.*

*The following recommendations are also recommended. Refining and implementing comprehensive merit system is the basis for civil service professionalism. Improving the performance management system is critical in today's Ethiopian Civil Service in order to align individual, team and organizational performance. The rules of advancement and promotion for career development must provide an incentive to public servants to obtain the best results both qualitatively and quantitatively. Competitive payment is a very vital element for the development of professionalism, since public servants who receive adequate remuneration feel secure in their jobs and therefore are better motivated. Public servants have always been expected to be neutral and to treat all citizens impartially and equitably in accordance with the laws and regulations in force.*

**Keywords:** *Professionalism, Civil Service, Ethiopian Civil Service.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Whether the chief executive of a government is an emperor, king, president, prime minister, duke, governor, or mayor, that government cannot function without some form of civil service. "The Public Service reflects the state of the nation and no nation has been able to advance beyond its Public Service" [1] (Adegoroye, 2005:2). This is because the implementation of government policies and strategies is highly dependent on the courage and passion of a respective civil service.

Civil service plays an indispensable role in the sustainable development and good governance of a nation. It is also an integral part of democracy because it serves as the neutral administrative structure which carries out the decisions of elected representatives of the people. Given these crucial roles, a country expects its public service to demonstrate high standards of professionalism and ethics.

For the purpose of this paper, the civil service is defined as the aggregate machinery (policies, rules, procedures, systems, organizational structures, personnel, etc.) responsible for the management and implementation of the whole set of government

activities dealing with the implementation of laws, regulations and decisions of the government and the management related to the provision of public services. Following this “Civil Servant” means a person employed permanently by federal government institution [2] (proc 515/2007).

By running the administrative machinery that supports decision-making and implements the policies and programs of the government of the- day, public servants play an indispensable role in the sustainable development and governance of a nation.

### **1.1 METHODOLOGY AND METHODS**

The main objective of the research is that assessing practices and identifying challenges of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia’s (FDRE) Civil service in terms of selected variables: recruitment and selection processes; and career development and promotion.

This research is a *qualitative holistic multi – case study*. Accordingly, the research employed explorative and descriptive methods. The actual data collection 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 Finance and Economic Development, and Ministry of Industry are selected. Then senior officers, senior experts, team leaders, and technical experts, from the three ministries, who are specifically chosen, based on their relevance for this study are included.

The instruments that are used for collecting data include in-depth interview with key informants; focus group discussion; and document analysis. The researcher selected key informants and focus groups for their specific knowledge of the information needed for the study. A review and analysis of documents also enabled the research not only to look for facts but also to read between the lines and pursue corroborative evidence elsewhere.

### **1.2 PROFESSIONALISM IN CIVIL SERVICE**

A civil service as a profession promotes the values of probity, neutrality, and fairness, among many others. Professionalism in the civil service is an overarching value that determines how its activities will be 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 a given country [3] (United Nations, 2000:1). It has embraced also the merit principle in setting up career structures from recruitment to promotions. Civil service professionalism embraces the notion that those people who join the public service need to be inculcated with shared values and trained in basic skills to professionally carry out their official duties. Complementary to this process is a need to set up management structures to ensure that a public service ethos and competence is achieved.

The rationale behind professionalism is that public servants should be neutral, impartial, fair, and competent and serve the public interest in carrying out their duties. They should be top people who are fairly compensated and adequately trained to perform their work.

With the advent of the modern state, by and large, the role of the civil service and a need for its neutrality, impartiality, integrity, and competence is widely acknowledged. To promote professionalism in the public service, the merit principle needs to provide the foundation for all human resources management actions—from recruitment and selections for promotions to fair remuneration and disciplinary procedures.

Initiatives to promote professionalism can begin simply with the existence of sound public management systems and practices. To start with, a career system based on the merit principle, which fairly and impartially recruits and promotes public servants, must be in place. This structure should be underpinned by a clear civil service law that outlines the legal rights and responsibilities of public servants. Further, well-articulated and fair human resource policies on appropriate remuneration, training opportunities, disciplinary procedures and the like should be implemented and enforced.

In sum, Conditions of Work - the entire field of relations between government officials, civil servants and government is a main determinant factor of nurturing professionalism in civil service.

### **1.3 Professionalism in Ethiopian civil service: a Historical Background**

The establishment of modern state organizations in Ethiopia took place very late relative to Europe and another world. For example, the Prussia monarchs realized the eighteenth century that “a centralized state, with a complex and extensive administrative system, required specially trained civil servants” [4] (Chapman, 1959:23). The General Code of 1794 summarized Prussia’s achievements in the field. The merit system for appointment covered all types of post and the general principle was that special laws and instructions determine the appointing authority to different public service ranks, their ranks, their qualifications, and the preliminary examinations required from different branches and different ranks (Ibid: 24).The development of such corps was the greatest example Prussia gave to Europe during the eighteenth century. For example, in Austria, the foundations of modern state administration were laid between 1749 and 1790 under Empress Maria. In Sweden, the separation of the central government into ministries and agencies dated back in the late 1600s [5] (Wilks, 1996: 24).

The modern Civil Service in Ethiopia dates back to 1907 when nine ministries were established, with an objective of “ensuring orderly and efficient arrangement for the workings of government” [6] (MoCS, 2012). The nine ministries were: Ministry of justice, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Commerce and Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Agriculture and Industry, Ministry of Public Works, Ministry of War, Ministry of Pen and Ministry of Palace [7] (Pankhrust, 1997).

Prior to this period, the country was under traditional administration and the different Ethiopian monarchs had failed to build any kind of administrative framework through which they could exercise their absolute power [8](Paulos, 2001:83).

According to [9] Bahiru (1991), 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 personal 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 the public.

As [10] Asmelash (1972) pointed out, during Menilek’s time, the ministers were not salaried and the 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 HaileSellassie 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. The Emperor attempted to institutionalize the rule bound public administration by establishing successive legal frameworks [9] (Bahiru, 1991).

- The establishment of the Imperial Institute of Public Administration in 1952: Its objectives included training of civil servants, consultation and research [10] (Asmalsh 1972).
- 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.
- 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 the 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 [11] (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 were 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 is 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 [6] (MoCS, 2012).

The Military government which took power through *coup de at* in 1974 has established its own image in the public service. 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 HaileSellassie.

Among some of the civil service reform measures taken during the period of the *Dergue*, 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 de-motivated a good number of them.

Moreover as indicated by [8] (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.

As to the size, statistics clearly depict that the Ethiopian civil service has been growing averagely by 6.7% annually since 1955 G.C and the trend is expected to keep on with increasing rate. During the reign of Emperor Haileseelase, in the year 1962/63, the total number of a civil servant was only 46,701. But, at the downfall of the Emperor in 1974 the civil servant has doubled itself and reached 93,965. During the fall of the *Dergue*, in 1991, the number of the civil servant has reached 216,058. The growth of the civil servant was interrupted three times in 1978, 1991 and (1996). At this time, the number of civil servants reached close to one million [12] (MOCS and GG, 2015).

## **2. DISCUSSIONS: PRACTICES AND CHALLENGES**

### **2.1 Recruitment and Selection process**

Any government institution, based on its strategic plan, is required to prepare and implement short, medium and long term human resource plan. The purposes of Human Resource Planning are to enable a government institution to take measure to meet the objective specified in the strategic plan, to forecast its human resource demand, to acquire human resource in the right number and type, to develop and properly utilize it, monitor and evaluate its result and make corrective measures from time to time.

Human resource management and development processes are required to abide with competency based recruitment, promotion, appraisal, remuneration, etc based on merit principles. In the same token, government institutions are obliged to advertise every vacant position to be filled by a new civil servant; and a vacant position shall be filled only by a person who meets the qualification required for the position and scores higher than other candidates [2] (Proc 515/2007).

Recruitment practices 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 usual type of recruitment falls under the second category. Here, the recruitment procedure for entry to the civil service is for the candidate to apply to an individual ministry in writing, stating his/her qualifications. Normally, ministries are required by law to announce publicly when a vacancy occurs. The qualification and references of the candidates are examined, and the most eligible may be interviewed. Responsibility for examining and recommending a candidate for a post lies with the human resource/personnel department of the ministry concerned. In the higher service, the successful candidate is appointed to office by the 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. It is fairly clear that this system offers fewer guarantees of impartiality than does a system of open competitive examination.

Real recruitment procedures and conditions represent one of the major problems in the ministries studied. Several of the conditions for objective recruitment procedures cannot always be guaranteed: a publication of job vacancies, procedures ensuring the observance of rules regarding formal qualifications (or other criteria).

What is more, though the selection procedure consists of a short interview aiming at determining whether the candidate possesses the necessary qualifications, a candidate is recommended by the head of the department in question and then officially recruited by a ministerial decision. In these conditions, professional or personal networks constitute the main recruitment source. Similarly, entry into the federal civil service is to some extent dependent upon the preservation of a balance between the constituent states, ethnic groups, and gender so that each is properly represented. To the knowledgeable, therefore, an advertised post may be destined from the start to go to in one of the ethnic groups or regional states. It seems that the qualifications required for senior posts are sometimes changed to fit particular people. In addition, a given vacant post may require, among other qualifications and

requirements, attitude and loyalty toward FDRE constitution, nations, nationalities, and peoples, etc which cannot be measured objectively. These could jeopardize the neutrality and appropriateness of the recruitment decisions taken.

Some employees from the three ministries were questioned to rate the factors that highly influence the recruitment and promotion of employees in the organization. This is to measure to what extent professionalism is affected in the organization. The variables were: merit, loyalty, political affiliation, and nepotism. Accordingly, the respondents have rated merit of the employee (qualification, experience, and performance) as the most influencing factor; the second is loyalty to the supervisor and the third is political affiliation; while nepotism is said the least influencing factor.

This indicates that the ministries are mainly recruiting and promoting 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.

This has a negative effect on maintaining professionals in the organization. If merit based approach is to be implemented, then the government should make these positions open for competition so that the civil service can get an inflow of competent public managers that would realize the mission of the public sector.

**2.2.1 Limited stock of qualified people in specialized areas specific to the public sector:** The public sector recruits employees from universities, colleges, technical and vocational schools as well as from other sectors. Due to supply-side and other constraints, there is a shortage of qualified personnel in the public sector, which in turn affects access to and quality of public service. The public service faces a critical shortage of qualified human resources in certain occupations. A study by [11] Atkilt (1998) reports human resource capacity gap as one of the critical capacity gaps adversely affecting organizational efficiency, effectiveness and good governance in public organizations in Ethiopia.

**2.1.2 Competition from Private Sector and Others:** The pay and incentive system is basically the same to the majority of civil servants irrespective of whether they work for the federal or regional governments. Civil servants in separate and relatively better pay systems are those working for institutions allowed to develop and implement their own separate pay scales within the legislative framework governing the overall civil service pay system. Unlike their counterparts in public enterprises, the NGO, and the private sectors, they are not allowed to negotiate pay increases and are prohibited from collective bargaining.

As compared to employees in the private sector and NGOs, public sector employees get lower salary and benefits. The salary in the public sector is not compatible to the salaries offered by NGOs and the rapidly increasing private sector organizations in the country to retain the experienced and qualified personnel.

Especially, the emergence of the private sector, especially the private banks and insurance companies have been depleted the civil service and left it with those that cannot enter such an alternative employment opportunity for civil servants. While the downside is somehow counterbalanced by the benefits and access to government structures that the civil service affords as significant attractions – housing priorities, official vehicle use and the perks; it is not enough to keep highly qualified change agents in Government.

Furthermore, some remain in constant search for high paying jobs in the private sector and NGOs, often wasting their time and drawing their attention away from their duties in public organizations. In this connection, variation in salary and benefits among professional sectors and between commercial and state funded practitioners are also identified as one of the challenges to professionalism in the public sector.

As professional employees are leaving the public sector for private and NGO sector for better salaries and benefits. Many positions in the civil service offices became vacant, which brought intense competition among civil service offices themselves for experienced professionals.

In general, the low level of salary payment in the civil service sector, the better offer of the market and the free movement of labor had made civil service offices to lose many of their qualified personnel. This leads to the recruitment of fresh, low achieving graduates who do not have the necessary training or professional experience and has forced employers to seek emergency solutions, such as the employment of low qualified personnel and recruiting through transfer from regional or *wereda* offices based on political loyalty.

## **2.2 Career development and promotion**

The professionalism of civil service depends not only on the quality of recruitment but also on the organization of career development. The notion of a career-based civil service can be described as a combination of several elements: early recruitment for life with a view to pursuing a career in the public administration; a hierarchical progression with successive stages and conditions for progress determined by rules and regulations; the assumption that officials will hold a series of posts in the course

of his/her career. A review of the existing civil service legislatures of FDRE also reveals that Ethiopia has clearly opted for a career-based system.

Career development based on the principle of rewarding merit constitutes the central element for professionalizing the civil service and motivating its officials. In FDRE civil service, career development is based on two factors taken into account simultaneously: seniority on the one hand and assessment of professional skills on the other.

However, while the seniority does not pose any question, setting objective criteria for performance appraisals poses many different kinds of problems, despite the provisions in legislative texts which, in some cases, lay down precise procedures. In order to reward merit, therefore, it is first necessary to put in place an evaluation system which makes it possible for decisions relating to career development to be based on a fair assessment of qualifications and performance, thereby ensuring the promotion of those officials whose competencies can be objectively recognized.

**2.2.1 Absence or lack of Results-Based Reward System:** Promotion is taken place for the purpose of enhancing the performance of government institutions and to motivate the employees. Any civil servant, who has completed his probation, may compete for promotion unless he is prohibited by relevant directives on promotion [2] (Proc.515/2007).

While there is a clear system of promotion in the civil service regulations, the fledgling human resources development, deployment and personnel audit capacities within the public sector have yet to be developed.

Accordingly, even though the experience and abilities of the officials are taken into account, other more subjective factors, such as personal or political links to their hierarchical superior, play a role, particularly in view of the fact that promotions are awarded at the minister's discretion. The minister himself reviews the performance and professional qualifications of the official, possibly after consultation with directors.

In order to minimize ambiguity and make standard based promotions, the performance rating is taken place quarterly and annually. The points to be evaluated include: official's knowledge for the performance of his/her duties; imitative in organizing his/her work and that of others; efficiency; public service acumen, punctuality and behavior on duty; his/her personal relations with colleagues, subordinates, and the public; behavior in relation to the means, both human and material, placed at his/her disposal for the performance of his/her duties; official's ability and attitude when dealing with the public. In addition, some immediate supervisor normally submits to the directorate who approves it.

According to the discussants in the ministries, however, though promotion in principle is by merit there is no objective and uniform standard of appraisal. This diminishes the value of the evaluation.

Here the problems are: first, job unrelated yardsticks are given more attention. Most of the time, evaluations are person – centered, attitudinal and psychological make – up of a civil servant, which is prone to abuse, are overemphasized (These are a systemic categorization of workers based on their political outlook). This job description, the mission of the institution, and institutional plans are given no or little attention. Second, even when these reports are used for promotion purposes they are not supplemented by considering the special requirements of the new job and by a general qualitative assessment by superiors of the official's potential ability to hold the higher post.

The higher posts are also closed to promotion since their holders are directly appointed by the minister who only rarely chooses properly established people from within or outside of the respective institutions. The lack of a system of publicly known and acknowledged political appointment at all levels of the civil service could be undermining of the career structure. It denies senior civil service positions to be held by competent career civil servants. This means that for the vast majority of civil servants there is no hope of promotion to the highest levels, and therefore no reason to overwork.

In the absence of results-based planning, monitoring, and evaluation systems, rewards will be less objective and unable to discriminate hard working and effective people from those that are not so. Sometimes, less hardworking and corrupt people could be rewarded and promoted based on some other unethical yardsticks such as loyalty to the supervisor, favoritism, nepotism and so on.

**2.2.2 Attitudinal problems and resistance to change among public employees:** Results- Based Performance Management requires the involvement of employees in the reform process of design and implementation. Partly due to limited communication effort and partly due to personal complacency with the existing system, managers, and senior professionals often resist change initiatives. Change resistance among managers and senior professionals has been found to be one of the dominant obstacles to change in public sector organizations and also identifies resistance among professionals to management interventions as one of the challenges to professionalism in the public sector [13] (Tsfayie and Atakilt, 2011).

**2.2.3 Weak linkage of HRD activities with the strategy and inadequate budget allocation to HRD:** Public servants cannot rely only on the knowledge and skill they obtained from formal education. They need a continuous learning and development at the work place. Whenever an organization changes its strategic direction, new knowledge and skills are required.

A government institution shall have the duty to identify the training needs of the institution and the civil servants and to prepare plans and budget for training and thereby ensure that civil servants receive the necessary training and furnish information thereon to the institution. Since public services are working in an environment that is in constant change, effective training and development are investments with high return. As professionalism is the quest for Excellency continuous learning should be a culture of the civil service. Civil service institutions that aspire professionalism need to lay effective human resource development systems, including formal and informal training such as pre - service training, in - service - training, post - service training, coaching and mentoring etc.

One of the basic challenges in this respect is the weak link HRD plans and activities have with the organizational strategy. In most cases, training needs are not assessed in light of the need to create and build human capacity that is required to execute organizational strategy and department plans that should, in principle, be derived from organizational strategy. The second challenge is related to the shortage of financial resources to fund training and development of public employees. The government's limited capacity to create decent and attractive work environment due to low levels of economic development, the government's limited capacity to generate revenue; and, limited external assistance targeted at improving public administration and developing professionalism in the public sector.

### **2.3 Nature of Politics – administration interface**

The boundary line between politics and administration is not at all clearly drawn. Historical and ideological realities have influenced the civil service. They have had a significant impact on its meritorious development. Indeed, the state has proved to be the main channel for securing a privileged position in society. In most cases, civil servants want to cultivate their contacts and make the best use of their social, educational and religious background. For ambitious civil servants, therefore, the best means of attaining high office is close contact with those with the power of appointment and promotion. The promotion of civil servants without membership of a political party is likely to be slow. On the other hand, Party affiliation may easily determine appointment to influential posts.

Moreover, the designs of most controlling systems in public sectors are highly influenced by the ideologies of politicians in power. An imposition of ideology implies controlling norms, values, expectations, attitudes, and beliefs of individuals, and it is tantamount to enforcing social control without getting the willingness of the group. The attempt of politicians to use their ideologies to control government organizations may cause divergence of goals between the politicians and the civil servants in the organizations.

In this regard, the legacy of a single party *Dergue* regime and its control over the administration has resulted in a highly politicized public service. Politics played a major role in decision-making and was deeply involved in the management of personnel. The increase in the powers of the political class to the detriment of the power of administrative managers resulted in, among other things, a spirit of clannishness becoming entrenched, with its network of nepotism and favoritism, which is particularly manifest in appointments within the administrative structure.

However, there is a growing tendency for public servants to demand and eventually to obtain better conditions, more safeguards, and an increasing measure of self – government. They are requesting self-governing profession, insulated from outside pressures and outside influence.

**2.3.1 Conflicts between senior professionals and politicians and/or management:** For reasons that deserve further investigation, some senior officials and managers consider senior professionals as a threat fail to work closely with them. On the other hand, some professionals show less interest to work cooperatively with the management, consider politically appointed leaders as incapable and distrustful and decline to accept assignments or provide a product of poor quality. Such conflicts hamper individual, team and organizational outcomes.

**2.3.2 Limited Leadership and managerial capacity:** Professional development partly comes from the leadership and managerial ability of the supervisor to urge and assist employees to do things in a more professional way and engage themselves in activities that develop their capacities. This requires skills for planning, monitoring, rewarding, change management, communication, coaching and mentoring, etc. However, due to limited awareness and practical skills, some leaders, managers and team leaders in public organizations are not supportive enough to their subordinates. This should not be surprising as leaders and managers are also drawn from the available stock of the labor force, whose capacity is limited by pre-employment and post-employment environmental, organizational and personal factors.

### **3. CONCLUSIONS**

The paper has discussed practices and challenges in professionalizing Ethiopian civil service. Based on the discussion, the following conclusions can be drawn.

- *Historical and ideological realities have influenced the civil service's professional development.* Politics has been playing a major role in decision-making and is deeply involved in the management of personnel. As a result, the civil service is a highly politicized institution.

- *Real recruitment procedures and conditions represent one of the major challenges.* Several of the conditions for objective recruitment procedures cannot always be guaranteed. Favoritism, nepotism and political loyalty are undermining civil service professionalism. This is especially true for middle and top level leadership.
- *Competition from the private sector and others have resulted in the limited stock of qualified people in specialized areas specific to the public sector.* The low level of salary payment in the civil service sector, the better offer of the market and the free movement of labor had made civil service offices to lose many of their qualified personnel.
- *The objective and uniform standard of appraisal and results-based reward system are either absent or abused.* In most cases, undue emphasis is given to job unrelated parameters in performance evaluation practices. In this regard, evaluations are the person-centered, attitudinal and psychological makeup of a civil servant, which is prone to abuse, are overemphasized.
- *Some leaders, managers and team leaders have limited awareness and practical skills to support their subordinates in their professional development.* What is more, conflicts between senior professionals and politicians and/or management sometimes hamper the Professional development of workers.
- *There is a weak linkage of human resource development activities with the strategy and inadequate budget allocation to human resource development.* In most cases, training needs are not assessed in light of the need to create and build human capacity that is required to execute organizational strategy and department plans that should, in principle, be derived from organizational strategy. The second challenge is related to the shortage of financial resources to fund training and development of public employees.
- *Civil servants and even sometimes the middle and top level leaders may develop a negative attitude and resistance to change.* Change resistance among managers and senior professionals has been found to be one of the dominant obstacles to professionalism in public sector organizations. Resistance among professionals to management interventions is also identified as one of the challenges to professionalism in the public sector.

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