

# Merit Based Human Resource Management in Tigray Region: Do We Really Know What We are Doing?

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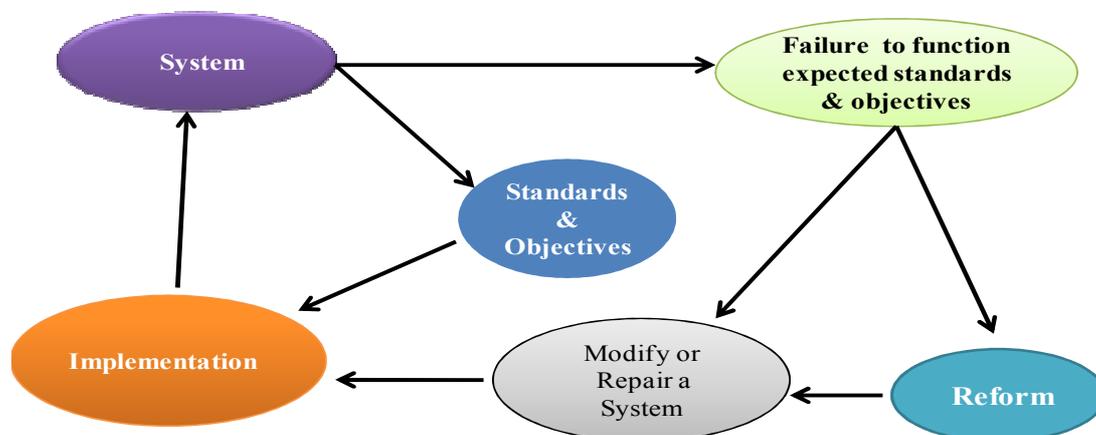
## Abstract

The Ethiopian People's Democratic Revolutionary Front (EPRDF), currently ruling party, comes to power after 17 years struggle for liberty and egalitarianism against the Military government. The May 1991 change of government (Socialist to Federal) was therefore a turning point for the civil service. It was during the early days of the EPRDF that the government tried to restructure the civil service system as a structural adjustment with federal sentiment (multi-party democracy and market driven economy). It was with this intention that, the autonomous civil service institutions were established and the civil servant was begun to serve with merit principles. It is believed that, a successful merit based human resource management is the cornerstone government institutions to implement public policies and strategies. This in turn also can have a direct impact on the development performance of the nation. However, some empirical evidence indicates that, the merit based human resource management is inhibited by many administrative bureaucracies. Therefore, the objective of this article was to examine the practice of merit based human resource management during the implementation of civil service reforms in Tigray regional state. To examine the merit based human resource management, the relevant data was collected both from primary and secondary data sources. Finally, the factors that impede the merit based human resource management were identified and the discussion was concluded that regardless of the institutional framework in-place, the application of merit disciplines as a guiding principles were highly inhibited by unnecessary political interference, poor separation of power, poor accountability system.

## 1. Introduction

Since the early days of the 1980s, as an innovative insight of the optimal organizational arrangement and techniques of institutional management, the Civil Service Reform (CSR) was emerged. It was initiated with the newly adopted New Public Management (NPM) model. The NPM model was desired as an alternative to the traditionally hierarchical and authoritative public administration (Vidaeak, 2000). The NPM is considered as a new paradigm shift to provide high quality services, increasing managerial autonomy, evaluating and prizing both the performance of an organization and individual public servant, capacitating public managers in terms of human resource, financial and physical asset as well as technological support to achieve the expected outcome (Polidano and Ewalt, 2001).

Civil Service Reform is one of the most visible and comprehensive areas of administrative reform. As Ntukamanzina (1998) cited in Lukumai (2006) stated, the need for reform arises:



Source: Adopted from Gebre Miruts PhD Dissertation power Point Presentation, 2014

With this mentality, the current Ethiopian government has taken the initiative of reforming the civil service since it came to power in 1991. The purpose of reforming the old civil service system was to avoid the undesired practices that hindered public service delivery as well as the socio-economic development of the country. The May 1991 change of government (Socialist to Federal) was a turning point for the civil service to respond to a mass of new political and socioeconomic changes that occurred in the country (AH Consulting, 2010). The government conducted a continuous reform to restructure the civil service system with the intention of multi-party democracy and market driven economy (Tilaye, 2007). Therefore, the main role of the civil service is changed and civil servants began to serve based on an autonomous institution and merit principles (Ministry of Capacity Building, 2004).

The government tried to restructure the civil service in three phases. The 1<sup>st</sup> phase (1991-95) was a Structural Adjustment Program to skip from the Socialist Ideology to Federal System, the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase (1996-2002) was instituted to build a Capable Civil Service to promote democracy, federalism and good governance, provide citizens with friendly service delivery and support government's socio-economic development policies and the development of private sector and the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase (2003 to date) was launched and great emphasis was placed on improving Quality Service Delivery.

The agenda for quality service delivery in Ethiopia was designed intentionally to strengthen the public institutions by establishing a merit based HRM, improve managerial effectiveness, and empower private and civic society organizations and higher education (Tilaye, 2007). However, some research findings and government reports indicated that, as the implementation of merit based Merit Based Human Resource Management (HRM) as a strategy to implement the CSR was challenged by poor recruitment and selection, inadequate promotion, ineffective performance appraisal and poor salary scale in the civil service.

But, the question is why is this takes place and how it is beyond the capacity of the civil service organizations? Therefore, the main objective of this research was to examine the Root Causes of the challenging factor of merit based HRM in Tigray region. Based on this main objective, the Article tried to address the research questions:

1. How the civil service reform is implemented in Tigray Region?
2. What practical challenges are facing the civil service to practice the merit principles?
3. What are the root causes of the factors that inhibit the merit based HRM?

The overall objective of reforming the civil service is to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the public sectors. Therefore, regarding to the significance of the study, the government administrative bureaucracy cannot be discussed in separation from the government merit based HRM. This is because, the merit system in campuses all the civil service guiding principles among others. However, in many instances, merit distortion and politicizing the civil services are among the critical challenging factors that impede the merit based HRM to the implementation of CSR. Therefore, this study was an attempt to contribute towards filling the gaps in merit based HRM to promote implementation of CSR. Methodologically, the study was conducted on a case study method and pertinent data was collected both from primary (questionnaire) and secondary (documents) data sources.

## **2. The Concepts of Merit Based Human Resource Management**

HRM is an umbrella term in perusing the civil service institutions and the CSR which include the specific human resource practices like staffing, selecting, appraising and promotion as well as the proper human resource policies that direct and partially constrain the development of specific practices and overarching human resource philosophies which specify the principles that inform institutional strategy (Jackson & Schuler, 1995). Ideally, these encompass a structure which attract, develop, motivate and retain employees who ensure the successful implementation of organizational goals and its members (ibid). However, it is immoral to misuse people, underuse and ill-treating them. Therefore, merit based HRM is the heart of effective CSR implementation. HRM as Nieto (1989) stated is, the designing of formal systems in an organization to ensure effective and efficient use of human talent to accomplish organizational goals. It is a planned approach to establish motivated staffs that can and will give their best support to achieve organizational missions. It is an organizational function which gives due attention to recruit, manage and provide direction for people who work in the organization.

### **2.1. The Merit System in the Civil Service**

Civil service development indicates that, HRM is either part of the problem or part of the solution in gaining the industrious contribution of people. This suggests that public organizations need to successfully administer their human resources in order to get the maximum contribution of their workforces (Redman and Wilkinson, 2001). In line with the effective implementation of public policies and strategies, strategic human resource planning is vital.

As asserted by MdG (2011), merit based recruitment, selection and promotion includes the specification of objective criteria associated with qualifications, experience and ability to achieve organizational goals as the basis for decisions concerning entry into or advancement within the civil service. The merit system strives to ensure recruitment and selection of the best and competent job applicants, in so doing it assists the efforts to

attract, secure and retain professional civil servants. Thus, merit based HRM is sound to ensure the right people in the right place at the right time. This means that CSR places great value on neutral competence in serving the government of the day and the merit system guarantees to the skilled civil servants by removing incompetent employees from the system (UNDP, 2003). However, the patron or spoil system gives privilege to party members by denying the non-members who are competent.

Besides, the patron system could not remove incompetent civil servants from the system because of their party members. CSR in contemporary public administration has instituted the merit system of selection, promotion and rewarding civil servants by civil service laws. Respecting the right of civil servants means there are satisfied and effective staffs which in turn can have a positive impact on staff moral and can be of tremendous benefit to any organization. Satisfied employees are more productive, deliver higher quality service and stay loyal to their society (Fenlon, n.d.).

Recruitment is the set of activities to attract competent and qualified job candidates to achieve organizational objectives. To this regard, rules, regulations and guidelines should be placed in staffing and recruitment should be the fundamental tool of staffing job candidates in accordance with the HRM plan (Redman and Wilkinson, 2001). Recruitment and selection to be effective, there should be sound policy that clearly specifies the responsibilities and overall institutional human resource requirements and gaps. Accordingly recruitments and selections should be merit based. Promotion on the other is, the assignment of civil servants to a higher grade and given for the purpose of enhancing the performance of government offices on merit system (ibid).

In other words, Satish (2004) considered merit based recruitment as a signal to the absence of political favoritism and extraneous influences, and is designed to make the civil service attractive to talent individuals. However, in multi-ethnic societal countries like Ethiopia, merit system is distorted by several factors such as patronage verses merit, the relative importance of ethnicity, religious, regional and gender preferences. Even where countries adopt a merit based system, different practices militate in favors of these biases (Satish, 2004). According to U.S Code (2010), the internationally accepted merit principles are:

- Recruitment should be from qualified individuals, appropriate sources in an endeavor to achieve a work force, all segments of society, and selection and advancement should be determined solely on the basis of relative ability, knowledge and skills, after fair and open competition which assures that all receive equal opportunity.
- All employees and applicants for employment should receive fair and equitable treatment in all aspect of personnel management without regard to political affiliation, race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, or handicapping condition, and with proper regard for their privacy and constitutional rights.
- Equal pay should be provided for work of equal value, with appropriate consideration of both national and local rates paid by employers in the private sector, and appropriate incentives and recognition should be provided for excellence in performance.
- All employees should maintain high standards of integrity, conduct, and concern for the public interest as well as the federal work force should be used efficient and effectively.
- Employees should be retained on the basis of the adequacy of their performance, inadequate performance should be corrected, and employees should be separated who cannot or will not improve their performance to meet required standards.
- Employees should be provided effective education and training in cases in which such education and training would result in better organizational and individual performance.
- Employees should be (a) protected against arbitrary action, personal favoritism, or coercion for partisan political purposes, and (b) prohibited from using their official authority or influence for the purpose of interfering with or affecting the result of an election or a nomination for election.
- Employees should be protected against reprisal for the lawful disclosure of information which the employees reasonably believe evidences (a) a violation of any law, rule, or regulation or (b) mismanagement, gross waste of funds, an abuse of authority, or a substantial and specific danger to public health and safety.

## **2.2. Performance Appraisal in the Civil Service**

The individual civil servant once engaged to implement the CSR, tentative evaluation is needed to measure individual performance. As Malay proverb says, "Every Man Is Good At something; It Is the Task of the Chief to Find It." Therefore, appraisers or supervisors should be vigorous in identifying individual talent in the civil service. Performance appraisal according to Morrisey (1983) is an evaluation of individual's job performance based on pre-stated standards and objectives in which, lower achievers need a corrective action through additional training, demotion, or separation, while, the higher achievers will be rewarded by philanthropic bonus, promotion and free scholarship which emanates from the strategic HRM.

Effective performance appraisal helps to clarify and define anticipations, identifying training and development

needs, plan success, career consultation, individual and organizational performance improvement, facilitation for communication and involvement, monetary reward allocation, determination of promotion, motivation and controlling human resources of public institutions (Redman and Wilkinson, 2001).

In a similar fashion, others also connote it in relation to the objectives and advantages it has and therefore performance appraisal can be done to uphold records so as to determine packages for remuneration, identification of strengths and weaknesses of public servants to place right people on right job, provision of feedback to civil servants about their performance and related status, to guide working cultures of public servant and reviewing and retaining promotional and additional capacity building programs (Schneir and Carrol, 1982). Likewise, Dechev (2010) asserts, effective civil servants communication with their leaders is very important and through performance appraisal, the civil service officials can understand and accept the skill of their staff. Civil servants can also understand and create trust and self confidence in superiors, performance appraisal also helps to maintain cordial and congenial bond of work administration and this builds team-spirit and staff morale. Performance appraisal can be used as inspirational tool. By evaluating civil servants performance, the individual civil servant competency can be determined. This motivates public servants for better job and assists them to advance their performance in the future.

However, performance appraisal and management in developing countries are practically poor and affect employees as a result of limited feedback with a negative effect on motivation. In most cases there is lack of transparency, inefficiency of appraiser and poor consultation, and lack of consensus among appraiser and appraisee (Morrisey, 1983). According to UNDP (2003), as the performance appraisal is affected by human factors, it needs openness and accountability. Hence, the appraisal systems have to relate individual performance with organizational goals, test competency and contribute towards a climate of open discussion within the public servants.

### **2.3. Performance Pay in the Civil Service**

Performance based pay has been utilized in the private sector for many years. The pay system is based on an employee's performance, measured by some predetermined means, which then leads to compensate based on that measure. These schemes incorporate a determination of productivity that is communicated to the employee at the onset of each measurement periods (Templet, 2006). To this regard, civil servants play an active role to implement any government policies and strategies and particularly the CSR by using their professional skills. Performance Pay is therefore a system of increments in civil service pay scale and rewards given for good performance after performance appraisal (Lukumai, 2006). The theoretical approach of performance pay gives due attention on the purposes of pay for performance that it helps to attain strategic goals, reinforce organizational norms, motivate performance at individual, group and organizational level, and recognize differential employee contributions (Templet, 2006). Pay for performance to be effective, civil service institutions need to meet the culture that supports pay for performance, rigorous performance evaluation system, effective and fair supervisors, appropriate training for supervisors as well as employees, adequate funding, system of check and balance to ensure fairness and ongoing system evaluation (U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 2006). Therefore, civil service institutions must allocate fund for performance based pay from their budgets.

Understanding the assumption behind pay for performance and its potential impact is critical to appreciate the function of civil service organizations. Nevertheless, civil service organizations also need to pay attention on the practicality and functional planning systems of performance pay (U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, 2006). However, in most developing countries like Ethiopia, the existing system of increments in the civil service pay scale is not closely linked to performance. Besides, the significant difference in public and private sector pay nowadays affect the implementation of CSRs in most developing countries including Ethiopia. The difference in salaries between the public and private sector is the major cause of most qualified government employees to depart from the public sector employment and to join the private sector (MDGD, n.d.). The objective of civil service pay is to offer sufficient remuneration to attract, retain, and motivate staff of suitable caliber to provide quality service to the public. Such remuneration should be regarded as fair both by civil servants and by the public which they serve. Within these parameters, broad comparability with the private sector is an important factor.

## **3. Results and Analysis**

Public management as a discipline acknowledges the knowledge and noble contributions of civil servants to development and intensification of public interest. In a contrary, the civil service is often blamed for its insufficient response to changes in the priorities of political leadership.

### **3.1. The Strategic Implementation of Civil Service Reform in Tigray Region**

In Ethiopia, the mandate to formulate the comprehensive national CSR program was given to the Ministry of Capacity Building that currently is called Civil Service Ministry. The Minister organized the CSR under five major sub-programs: Top Management System, Human Resource Management, Expenditure Management and

Control, Ethics, and Public Service Delivery sub-reform programs. All the regional states in Ethiopia are also expected to cascade and regionalize the entire national CSR program. As in others, the Tigray Region CSR program was organized in the same manner.

The legal organizational framework to implement the CSR in Tigray Region was aligned with the larger national CSR implementation program. All the components of the national CSR program are also part of the Regional CSR implementation program. Like the federal, the government of Tigray Regional State devolved the mandate to the civil service Bureau of the region to regionalize and adopt the CSR program as well as to implement (Tigray CSR main document, 2004). The Top Management System sub-reform was intended to provide and strengthen regional strategic planning by setting pre-stated standards and objectives, enhancing regional inter-organizational communication, measuring and managing regional performance, developing regional structures and systems for reporting, regional program and project management, managing regional value for money among others (Tigray CSR main document, 2004).

In addition to this, The HRM sub-reform program was instituted to create a legal regional framework that provides merit-based recruitment, selection and promotion, ensures workforce training and result-based performance appraisal; to improve effectiveness, efficiency and productivity of the civil service. In addition, it was introduced to ensure affordability and sustainability of the civil service, to develop and introduce more efficient HRM systems, procedures and manuals at regional level, to organize and utilize HRM information system, to assist regional and lower tier government institutions in the region (Tigray CSR main document, 2004).

Likewise, the Tigray Expenditure Management and Control sub-reform was established to improve efficiency and effectiveness of public expenditure management. It was designed to introduce a legal regional framework, a budget classification system, new accounting system, a medium-term regional planning system, regional cash and asset management system in order to institutionalize an effective regional procurement system and a financial management information system. On the other hand, the Public Service Delivery sub-reform program was designed to promote effective and efficient regional service delivery and ensure open and fair treatment of customers. The Ethics sub-reform was a deliberately included section to enhance the codes of conduct at regional levels for civil servants and heads of public offices by providing, ethics education, and launching an anticorruption organ (Tigray CSR main document, 2004).

As part of the administrative reform, the district level decentralization created a good condition to implement the CSR in Tigray. The Ethiopian district level decentralization reflects the five levels of government structure at the Federal, Regional, Zonal, Woreda and Kebele. In Tigray Region, however, unlike Amhara, Oromia and SNNPs regional states, the Zone administrations lack some administrative structure. The zone administrative system in Tigray is organized without elected councils and it also lacks the lower tier of other Bureaus at zonal level. Nevertheless, the Zones are functional as they are performing mandates passed by the regional government through their executive committees and assistance from the zone administrators.

The Woredas and Kebeles are considered essential elements of in the government ladder and by law, these levels of regional government select councils and executive committees who are responsible for local governance and economic development. In all Woredas there are sector offices equivalent to the regional Bureaus that are very crucial to implementing the CSR and other government policies. Therefore, it will be rational with this institutional setup to discuss the implementation strategy of CSR in Tigray Region in relation to merit based HRM which helps to dig-out the practical challenges of HRM and to realize the root causes of factors that impede the effectiveness of Merit based HRM in the study area.

### **3.1. Human Resource Management in Tigray Region**

In order to decentralize and depoliticize the civil service, governments around the globe have institutionalized CSR in light of their HRM goals. The major objective of the CSR is to modify, repair or transform the public service institutions and create an effective and efficient public servant. The orientation of the Ethiopian CSR was therefore a top agenda of the EPRDF government since 1991. The HRM sub-reform programs are the vigorous ingredients of the larger CSR. One of the major objectives of the HRM sub-reform in Tigray was to create a legal framework both at regional and Woreda/sub-city levels. Consequently, the government of Tigray region established a legal framework for the civil service under its jurisdiction.

One vital aspect of administrative decentralization in Ethiopia is the devolution of power. With this in mind, the power to recruit, select, promote, assign, grievance hear and inspect as well as transfer within the Woreda; and human resource development through short, medium and long-term training are given to the civil service Bureau and the Woreda/sub-city civil service offices under the revised Tigray civil servants proclamation No. 189/2011. In Tigray, Human Resource Management is considered one of the fundamental resources to strategically implement the CSR. This vital resource fixes the implementation of government policies and strategies as well as the CSR. The regional government deems that the appropriate management of this vital resource is essential to sustain socio-economic development in the region, widen democratization and the execution of laws.

As foundation to implementing the CSR effectively, both the federal and regional civil services were established with merit-based HRM. The Federal Civil Servants Proclamation No. 515/2007 in general and the Tigray Civil Servants Proclamation No. 189/2011 in particular clearly state the merit principles. The merit-based HRM statement declares recruitment and selection as well as promotion to be merit-based with fair and open competition, treat staff and applicants fairly and equitably, provide equal pay for equal work and reward first-rate performance, maintain high standard of integrity, ensure public interest, manage civil servants efficiently and effectively, retain or separate civil servants on the basis of their performance, educate and train staff, and protect employees from improper political influence, among others.

However, most of the respondents revealed that the merit-based HRM in Tigray Region was functional only in drafting regional Proclamations, Rules, Regulations and Guidelines. During the implementation of the intended merit principles, there existed unnecessary political meddling in recruitment, selection and promotion, personal networking advantages in appointments, poor rewarding system, lack of skill gap analysis, politicization of the civil service and lack of clearly stated timeframe in monitoring were identified as major challenging factors of HRM. The negative pressure in HRM can have a direct impact on the implementation of the CSR in the region.

### 3.1.1. Merit Based Recruitment and Selection

As merit-based recruitment and selection is a vital feature of HRM. Therefore, as asserted by Bratton (2007), establishing a clearly designed policy when and how to select and recruit a permanent employee is an important precondition for HRM Merit-based systems strive to ensure the recruitment and selection of a relatively best and most capable candidates, thereby assisting efforts to attract, secure and retain professional and high quality civil servants.

Many scholars agree that Merit-based recruitment and selection comprises of a set of activities and processes used to legally obtain a sufficient number of qualified people at the right place and time so that the people and the organization can select each other in their own best short and long term interests. The Ethiopian Federal Civil Servants Proclamation No. 515/2007 states that, “a vacant position shall be filled only by a person who meets the qualifications required for the position and by the candidate who scores higher than other candidates”. Likewise, the Tigray Civil Servants Proclamation No. 189/2011 affirms that the merit-based recruitment and selection should be done from among qualified pool of candidates and with the aim to achieve a diversified workforce representing all segments of society.

Respondents were consulted to share their observation and opinion of the HRM implementation strategies and the application of merit-based recruitment and selection criteria. Table 4 illustrates that despite the fact that the law advocates the assurance of merit-based recruitment and selection and effective CSR implementation, most respondents (64.6% and 59.1%) were disagreed that qualification and competency-based recruitment and selection criteria and a merit-based system were applied, respectively. On the other hand, respondents believed that recruitment and selection in Tigray was the primary process used for attracting candidates in accordance with human resource plan (include reference to data here). The effort to apply the merit-based recruitment and selection criteria was made difficult by the recruiter. The respondents validated this bias and 70.4% of the contributor confirmed that, recruitment priority was given to experience and 82% of them asserted entrance exam was a repeatedly applied merit criteria during recruitment in the civil service.

Table 1: Merit Based Recruitment and Section Criteria

Survey Statement	Merit Criteria	SA	A	NC	D	SD
In your Woreda/Sub City as part of the HRM, Merit based recruitment and section is applied by using	Qualification	11.2%	24.2%	-	46.6%	18%
	Experience	1.4%	69%	-	27.6%	2%
	Competence	9.9%	31%	-	39.8%	19.3%
	Entrance Exam	16.3%	65.7%	-	13.9%	4.1%

Note: SA: Strongly Agree; A: Agree; NC: No Comment; D: Disagree; SD: Strongly Disagree

Source: Field Survey, 2013/14

From the above discussion, it is clear that the merit-based recruitment and selection criteria in Tigray region were not fully applied. It is known that experienced professionals and competent civil servants are vital for proper execution of government policies and effective implementation of CSR. Nonetheless, if qualification and competency are inadequately applied and focus is given to experience and entrance exam results, in some sense, there is a possibility to hire unqualified applicants while on the other hand reject fresh professional graduates who may be competent civil servants.

A good HRM is typified by its open and transparent competition-based recruitment and selection that assures merit-based competition. Some of the interviewees and focus group discussants pointed out that individuals who held key hiring positions exercised personal bias defying the merit-based principles by forwarding favored candidates though they went through the motions of competitive procedures for the sake of formality. Preference was given to candidates who catered to officials or to party (TPLF) members. Such practices seem to be deeply

entrenched and difficult to stop altogether.

The other serious problem observed was in promotion of existing civil servants. In Tigray, when a civil servant is upgraded due to his/her academic achievements, particularly for teachers agricultural extension workers, Economists, Managers or Accountants, work experiences seem to be ignored. Another concern area is that the HRM guidelines do not include all categories of employment, such as managers and economists, giving latitude to self-serving employers. For that reason, though some candidates studied in those fields, it was very difficult to go through the application process and compete in vacancies that were announced in management positions and in other similar fields. Hence, urban management positions were not managed by candidates with qualifications in urban management and similarly most public management related positions were not filled by public management experts.

Similarly, the paradox in strategic planning and merit based recruitment and selection was observed when federalism graduates were appointed in positions that required land administration experts and the urban land graduates were appointed in public relations positions. The travesty was heightened in witnessing appropriately educated public management and federalism graduates sitting idle for four to five months following their graduation simply waiting for appointment in those vacant positions in the Region while indeed being advanced monthly payments from payroll. Some official rejoined to this idea but some argued in contrary that most of the problem comes from the civil servants themselves.

### **3.1.2. Performance Appraisal**

The ideal approach of NPM is the inception of some private sector disciplines into the public service. Of which, the civil servants Performance appraisal is accepted. Performance appraisal is a system by which individual civil servants are directed to make an effective contribution to their organization. The optimistic aspects of measuring civil service performance is imperative to civil servants motivation, serve as a strategic tool to raise the overall standards in government services and to increase institutional accountability (Redman and Wilkinson, 2001).

In principle, civil servants performance appraisal and the way feedbacks discharged in Tigray was stated as a continuous process and the periodic formal performance appraisal was justified to be dictated by the practical need to review civil servants performance every three and six months and the appraisal to be on a uniform basis for all individuals in a work unit (Tigray BSC document, 2013). The Ethiopian CSR was designed taking performance measurement at the central as an over sighting mechanism for program implementation. At the heart of the implementation of CSR in Tigray, BPR was introduced as an approach to bring a radical and fundamental change in public service. The fundamental rethinking and radical redesigning of public business processes was to achieve a dramatic improvement in government expenditure, quality service provision and speedy service delivery among others (Tigray BPR manual, 2009). Consequently, a legal framework that determine how and when should be a civil servants performance will appraised was commenced.

In the Tigray Civil Servants Proclamation No. 189/2011, Article 31 sub article 1, there is a clear definition about the purpose of performance appraisal. Its importance is, “to enable civil servants to effectively discharge their duties in accordance with the expected level of quality standards, time and expense, to evaluate civil servants on continuous basis and identify their strengths and weaknesses with a view to improve their future performance, to identify training needs of employees, to give reward based on result and to enable management to make its administrative decisions based on concrete evidence.” Similarly, the CSR implementation strategy in Tigray Region was proceeding by applying the Balanced Score Card (BSC) as an approach to job evaluation and grading, and performance management. The annual plan of Tigray CSB (2012) indicates that, the Region is working to achieve the expected outcomes of the CSR putting citizens at the top. The following figure illustrates the citizen first model in Tigray Region. At each level of the citizen first model, there expected performance measurement.

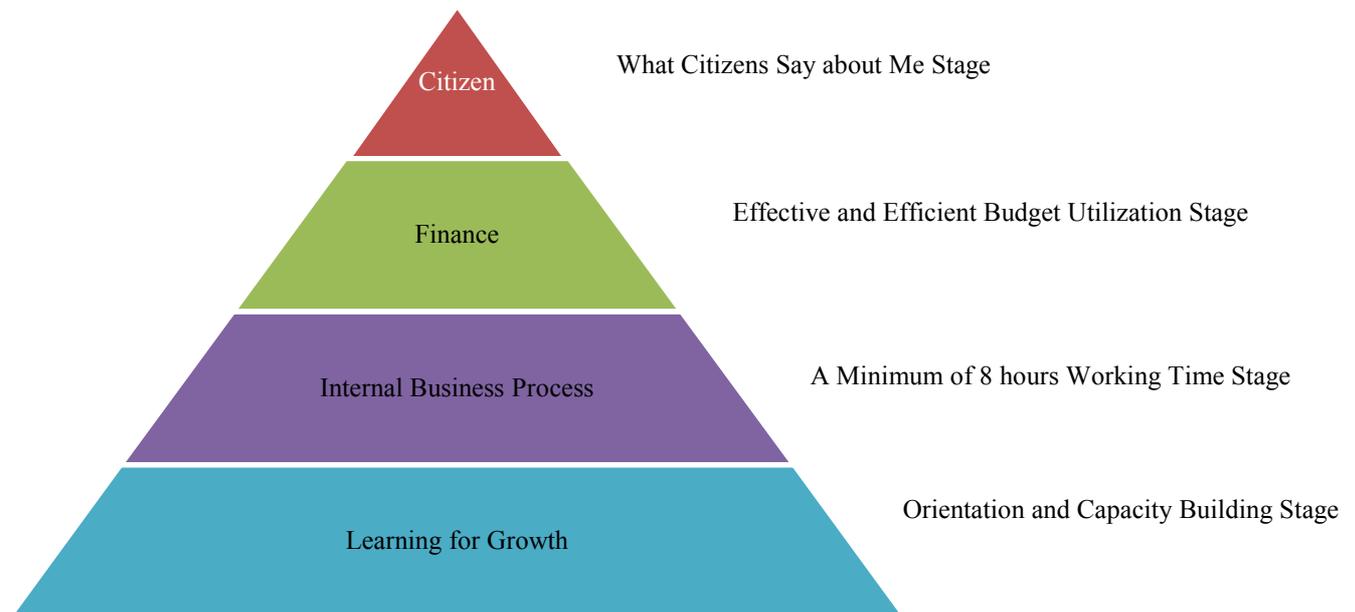


Figure 1: Citizen First Model in Tigray Region  
 Source: The Researcher's Own Survey, 2014

During the field survey, respondents were consulted to disclose their opinion in relation to the proper application of civil servants performance appraisal. Hence, though, the BSC was placed to measure and manage employee's performance, Table 2 below shows that, civil servants were not aware of the pre-stated standards in which civil servants are measured. Because, 45.9% of the civil servant participants shown their rejection to accept the logic about the well known pre-stated standards. On the other hand, in the same table, there observed the highest frequency distribution (66.3%) was registered on the opposition to admit the appropriate consultation among Appraiser and Appraisee on the performance appraisal criteria. Therefore, whatever modals established or quality plans in place, if the vital arm of the implementation is not clear on the ongoing pre-stated standards and objectives, and if no consultations among managers and subordinates, the implementation of CSR strategy is obvious to suffer because of such paradox.

The other issue to be considered is that, the consensus building on individual performance after appraised. Social science scholars suggest that, the issue of performance appraisal is not only the civil servants performance evaluation but also how to accomplish it fairly, reliably and without generating unnecessary conflict. However, besides the poor awareness creation on the pre-stated standards and objectives and lack of discussion among Appraiser and Appraisee, in Tigray there was also lack of consensus building among Appraiser and Appraisee. For that reason, 85.1% of the respondents confirmed their disagreement on the attainment accord on performance outcomes. What is important to note here is that, if the institutional situations elevate serious doubts on the ability to rate individual performance as well, the question of whether or not to have a formal performance appraisal system comes back to the fore because a bad performance appraisal system is much worse than none at all (Pierre and Ingraham, 2010).

The dynamic implementation of CSR considers the rewarding system of the implementers. The fundamental nature of rewarding the civil service is basically based on performance. In Tigray, after a proper appraising system, there expected a negative or positive rewards. However, the trial to take a corrective action against low performers and rewarding for higher performers based on the results of the appraisal were not significantly in place. For this reason, 77.2% of the respondents replied that no corrective action held to administer low performers and 75.1% of them also stated no significant rewarding system for higher achievers in the civil service organization of Tigray Region. On the other hand, the practice to relate individual performance with organizational goals in the region was not properly managed and 62.6% of the respondents were disagreed in such a way. At its most failure, during the performance appraisal, there witnessed the highest mode recorded (60.8%) on opposing that both appraisers and appraises were not accountable for what they did in the civil service institutions in relation to performance appraisal.

Table 2: Performance Appraisal in the Civil Service

Survey Statements	Scale									
	SA		A		NC		D		SD	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
The existence of well known pre-stated standards	41	13.9	117	39.8	1	.3	90	30.6	45	15.3
Proper consultation on performance appraisal criteria	22	7.5	76	25.9	1	.3	142	48.3	53	18
Consensus building on the result given	19	6.5	24	8.2	1	.3	136	46.3	114	38.8
Result based corrective actions	20	6.8	46	15.6	1	.3	133	45.2	94	32
Result based rewarded and motivated	17	5.8	56	19	-	-	183	62.2	38	12.9
Relating individual performance with organizational goals	20	6.8	90	30.6	-	-	139	47.3	45	15.3
Accountability of Appraiser and Appraisee	29	9.9	82	27.9	4	1.4	133	45.2	46	15.6

Note: SA: Strongly Agree, A: Agree, NC: No Comment, D: Disagree, SD: Strongly Disagree

Source: Field Survey, 2013/14

Similarly, discussions were held with respondents in focus group discussion and interview about the ongoing performance appraisal system in Tigray Region. All respondents appreciated the audition to measure civil servants performance. However, most of the respondents argue that, the way the appraisal criteria were applied. First and for most, the pre-stated appraisal criteria were endorsed from above without any open discussion and consensus. Even if trainings were administered on how to appraise, it was based on the already approved document and you park yourself either to accept or simply to hear what is going on. Because, even the trainer was conveying what was in the written document. If asked, he/she can suggest what he/she feels to convince but relevant inputs were not considered.

Secondly, there was system instability. At one time BPR was a hot agenda and now the BSC and the Citizen Charter are the dominant thinking. Even so, the other confusing part of the performance appraisal was the paper work on BSC. Most officials were not clear on that and they are confusing us. To the extent, one of the interviewed supervisors said that “Zeiteredaani nzeiteredeom bzaeba BSC kered’e yikeyd aleku.” literally means that, “I am going to provide a lecture on BSC to make it understandable that I am not understood.” You see how much serious the problem was.

Finally the other issue raised by all the interviewees and focus group discussants was that most sector offices had not yet started to appraise formally as an organization, no processes are in place, and individual performance based on the existing BSC materials. Even in institutions that started to appraise, the process was incomplete where the appraisal outcome was inconsequential. Two appraisal systems seem to operate side by side. One is using the normal civil service procedure and the other by the party system. In the event there is conflict between the two systems, the person appraised may be unfairly penalized. For reward purposes, party assessment comes first in recognition of the ‘Model’ civil servant. This approach was not appreciated by most of the interviewed officials and the core process owners. They instead support the performance appraisal as the primary criteria rather than the “Meseretawi wudabe Gemgam” which is the political party entity evaluation.

The respondents added that, the assumption that Process Owners usually assess the performance of their subordinates was distorted by the tedious campaign field work. The information obtained from the focus group discussants in the entire sample from Woredas and Sub-cities stated that, the process owners in each sector office were attempting to set departmentalized plans at the beginning of the budget year. However, throughout the year, they are mandated to spend time at local Kebeles so as to assist the community acting as politicians and leaving aside their regular office work. Furthermore, most of the activities performed were not free of political sentiments.

Consequently, the whole performance appraisal plan for most of the civil service departments remains only a whitepaper. Therefore, in current practice, the civil servant performance measurement is mostly done arbitrarily. The communally respected process coordinators appear one at a time and they subjectively evaluate someone’s performance as ‘A’ for very high performer, ‘B’ for high performer, ‘C’ for medium performer and ‘D’ for low performer. Since, the system is personalized and quite subjective one rarely sees a D score in this loose system. In this approach, no one is held accountable for what he/she does. In this study, a pervasive lack of complementary measures was observed. The system did not permit civil servant self-rating that would promote honest discussion between process owners and subordinate. In practice, the arbitrary appraisal system applied is in fact against the objectives of the CSR. The deep entrenched unsatisfactory performance appraisal system in the region was the most difficult aspect of civil service performance management.

The discussion on Tigray performance appraisal system also exhibited most of the challenges raised and related with poor job design, poor work environment, inadequate planning and unrealistic deadlines, mismatching of people and jobs, unclearly defined responsibilities and expectations and communication difficulties. If the

system is allowed to continue on such a bumpy road, the Tigray civil service institutions not only will continue to sanction poor performance, but will unfortunately also demoralize good performers and over time will cause the entire organization to erode. In this regard, almost all officials accepted the endless campaign fieldwork that they were tied on and most of them were also stated if not exaggerated, the issue that the civil servants have raised was appreciated and as they were also sensed it and as currently they are working on that to reduce the campaign work. From the overall discussion, the strategic implementation of the government policies and the CSR in the region was highly affected by the campaign fieldworks. It is true that government policies, strategies and programs can not implemented in a fragmented institutional setup and approach.

However, the firefighting like approach cannot brought the intended outcomes unless where, when and how to approach programs collectively were not pre defined. This is because, it can weaken the implementation of sector specific planned objectives furthermore it can bring local administrators dependency, lack of professional confidence to implement development programs and there will be also unnecessary political interference. From the entire performance appraisal discussion, in Tigray Region, there observed lack of complementary measures like civil servants self-rating with some success to promote an honest discussion between process owners and subordinate. Besides, the practice to arbitrarily measures of individual performance was against the objective of the CSR. The deep rooted unsatisfactory performance appraisal system in the region was of the most difficult aspects of civil service performance management.

The discussion on Tigray performance appraisal system also exhibits that, most of the challenges raised were related with poor job design, poor work environment, inadequate planning and unrealistic deadlines, mismatching of people and jobs, unclearly defined responsibilities and expectations and communication difficulties. If continue through this bumpy road, the Tigray civil service not only sanctions poor performance but also demoralizes the good performers and in the course of time it erodes the entire organization.

### **3.1.3. Merit Based Promotion**

The literature affirms that merit-based promotion is the process of advancement of an individual civil servant from one job position to another that has higher salary variety, higher level job position and responsibilities. As asserted by Sarah (2010), promotion is viewed as advantageous to employees because promotion has an impact on pay, authority, responsibility and the ability to influence broader organizational decision-making process. The Ethiopian Federal Civil Servants Proclamation No. 515/2007 in general and the Tigray Civil Servants Proclamation No. 189/2011 in particular agree that promotion is the assignment of a civil servant to a higher grade level and it is given for the purpose of enhancing the performance of government institutions and to motivate employees.

Promotion as HRM discipline ought to consider all eligible civil servants on equal basis. The application of merit-based criteria in Tigray was used as motivating tool to assist individuals and organizations so as to improve their skills and abilities. As indicated in Figure 2, the merit based selection criteria to promote high performer civil servants were inadequately applied. Civil servants are typically promoted based on their experience. 50.6% of the respondents valued the fact that priority was given for experience to promote someone. The fundamental nature of merit-based promotion is to reward and recognize higher performers in the civil service and needs to be applied in consideration of all the merit criteria.

Nevertheless, 52% and 53.7% of the participants disagreed on the application to consider performance and qualification, respectively as merit-based promotion criteria in Tigray Region. The other important but ignored criterion was the application of entrance exam. This merit principle helps to provide equal opportunity for competent professionals. Civil servants in the study area, however, were not expected to sit for entrance exam for promotion purposes. For this reason, 92.2% of the respondents were avowed their rejection to the practicality of entrance exam as a promotion measure to take positions and responsibilities in the civil service organization of the region. 52.3% of the respondents were also disagreed to accept the application of competency as promotion criteria 37.7% of them accepted the functional application of promotion as merit based promotion criteria.

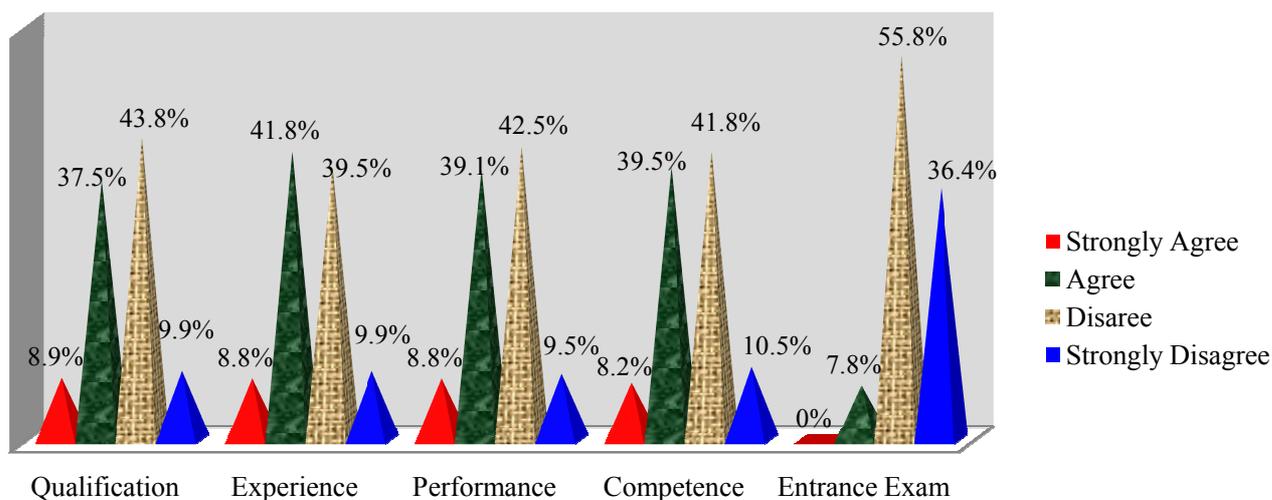


Figure 2: Merit-Based Promotion  
 Source: Field Survey, 2013/14

At some point in the implementation of CSR, there need to motivate and reward high performer civil servants to amplify their effectiveness and efficiency. Motivation is about the internal and external forces that influence individual's degree of willingness and choice to engage in a certain specified behavior and action (Reem, 2010). For this reason, civil servant respondents of the sample Woredas and Sub Cities were requested whether the civil service organizations narrate promotion as a reward and motivation or not. All the civil servants under study accept the notion that promotion is a form of recognition for employees who make significant and effective work contributions. However, in practice as indicated in the crosstab table 3 below, 74.5% of the respondents revealed their rejection to illustrate the improper application of merit based promotion as a reward in their institutions. Only 24.8% of them realized as promotion was properly applied to reward and motivate the civil servant. Both male and female were victims of the poor applicability of promotion as a motivating and rewarding factor in the study area. Hence, 72.9% of the male and 77.5% of the female respondents were replied promotion was not applied to motivate and reward the first rated civil servant.

Table 3: Sex \* Is Promotion given as a Reward or Motivation to award the high performer civil servants?

			Promotion as Reward or Motivation			
			Yes	No	I Don't Know	Total
Sex	Male	Count	50	140	2	192
		% within Sex	26.0%	72.9%	1.0%	100.0%
	Female	Count	23	79	0	102
		% within Sex	22.5%	77.5%	.0%	100.0%
Total		Count	73	219	2	294
		% within Sex	24.8%	74.5%	.7%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2013/14

Likewise, to implement the CSR as effectively as possible, the HRM sub reform program was placed strategically to mix and apply the merit principles. Regardless of its practice, in Tigray Region, there was a clear determination on how to promote and who should be promoted in advance of the evaluation process. In the Tigray Civil Servants Proclamation No. 189/2011, there is a clear definition stating that promotion shall be given for the purpose of enhancing the performance of government institutions and to motivate civil servants. Moreover, Article 25 sub Article1 of this proclamation also states that, any civil servant who has completed his term may compete for promotion unless he/she is disqualified by relevant directives on promotion. To further strengthen this point, since promotion is not free of human bias, Article 26 of the proclamation states that, a promotion obtained on the basis of fraudulent evidence or granted in contravention of the law shall, without prejudice to disciplinary and illegal liability, be revoked at any time.

With this in mind, focus group discussants were consulted to share their opinion on the practical implementation of promotion as part of merit-based HRM. As a result, some of the respondents expressed annoyance saying why

they were asked about the distorted merit principles, while party loyalists enjoyed all the civil service positions. Some others also added, “Please leave it, it is only on the whitepaper civil servants proclamation that all merit disciplines were correctly stated”. To be promoted and hold some positions, the first thing to be asked is whether you are member of the ruling party or not. Once screened in this way, the next step focuses on how civil servants accept the current state of affairs. If one raise questions or argues on the rules and regulations stated that one would certainly be condemned as soon as he/she left the room. Personally condemned people would be denied fair evaluation and promotion. Promotions and desirable positions appear to be reserved for those favored by incumbent officials.

The other notorious thing is that, if you do not have the right connection with government or the ruling party officials, no one can remember you through the merit line for promotion however industrious you may be. This is what is in practice and for that matter; one survival mode is that you hide yourself as ‘sleeping dog’. For sure, if you go down into and check the civil service system, this is the reality in Tigray today said some of the interviewee and focus group discussants. The rationale behind this discussion was to underscore that the civil servant selection procedures in the region established for promotional purposes under value the most meritorious civil servants.

Similarly, some civil service officials confirm the existence of ill network in the civil service has affected the merit based promotion systems but it was rare. However, most of the officials claimed the civil servants response and justified as all promotion systems were held on the bases of merit principles and competitions. Civil service Promotion is considered as giving some high responsibility or position with high salary and better privilege to execute government programs. With this assumption, civil service promotion programs were not free of human bias. For this reason, the complete application of the merit principles in promotion replied by some of the officials were far from the logic behind the human biasness. Hence, by comparing the civil servants and officials response, we can conclude that, the merit based promotion in Tigray region lacks rational discriminatory approach.

#### 3.1.4. Performance Pay

The HRM sub reform in Tigray takes in to consideration the pay for performance principle. The outlook for fundamental shift in BPR and the BSC was intentionally about quality service provision. The BSC manual in the Region dictates that, civil service institutions need to meet the culture that supports pay for performance, rigorous performance evaluation system, effective and fair supervisors, appropriate training for supervisors as well as employees, and system of check and balance to ensure fairness and ongoing system evaluation. Nevertheless, the performance evaluation and the performance pay in the study area were applied in contrary. The crosstab table 4 below recaps this condition.

Table 4: Sex \* Do you think that, the existing civil service pay scale is closely linked to performance appraisal in your Woreda/sub city? Cross-tabulation

			Civil service pay scale based on performance appraisal		
			Yes	No	Total
Sex	Male	Count	35	157	192
		% within Sex	18.2%	81.8%	100.0%
	Female	Count	13	89	102
		% within Sex	12.7%	87.3%	100.0%
Total		Count	48	246	294
		% within Sex	16.3%	83.7%	100.0%

Source: Field Survey, 2013/14

As we can see from the Table 4, 83.7% of the respondents answered that the civil service pay-scale was not linked to the performance appraisal system. Similarly, 81.8% of the male and 87.3% of the female respondents also affirmed that the two were not linked. Only 16.3% of the participants responded yes confirming that the civil service pay-scale is applied based on the performance appraisal system. Under government policy, public servant salary can be increased on the basis of length of service, but this is not based on performance review. The current reward and motivation related system aims to reward good performance and ‘Model’ employees. However, contrary to the plan, the current system is highly dependent on the whims of officials and party affiliation.

Some of the respondents also suggested that, in most cases, presumed model civil servants are not selected by their job performance but through partisan relationships and patron network with the evaluator. In Tigray, civil servant recruitment was basically systematized as permanent placement. Unless they misbehaved, civil servants can usually anticipate staying in their position permanently in spite of their performance. Figure 3 depicts the

large number of civil servants who earned 1000-1999 (less than 2,000) Ethiopian Birr since 2011. In the highly inflated age today, we can imagine how life has become unbearable for the majority of the civil servants in Tigray.

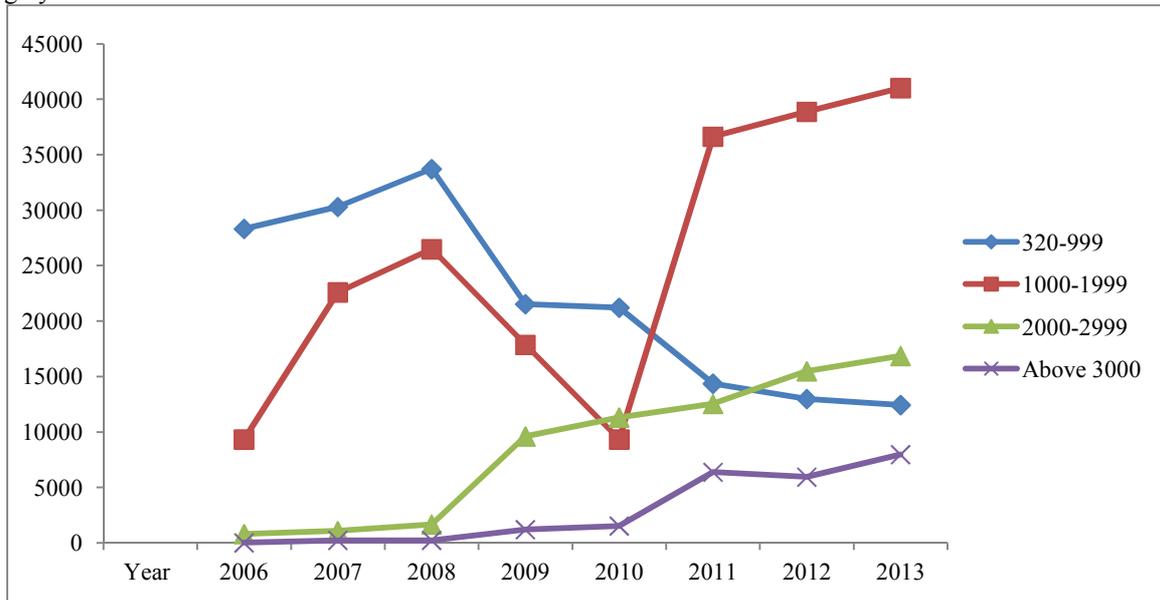


Figure 3: Public Servants Salary Scale

Source: Tigray CSB, HRM Core Process Owner, 2013

In response to the survey question, most of the participants claim the government pay scale. The Tigray civil servants proclamation No. 189/2011 clearly states that Bureaus shall prepare a salary scale to be applied in the civil service in general and submits the plan to the Regional Cabinet Council and that is what is implemented upon approval. Nevertheless, it is obvious that the civil servants are suffering due to the ‘sky skewed’ market price while in the meantime; the government is creating new organizations as Agencies with a different salary scale that is twice as high as that of the civil servants’. For instance, you can take the revenue agency office at bureau level in general and at Woreda in particular. The employee in the agency at a process owner position earns from 6,000 to 8,000 Birr a month, while the long-standing civil servant earns from 3,817 to 4,343 Birr per month. Hence, no need to compare the civil service with the private sector since the discrepancy within two government agencies provides sufficient evidence. This practice defies the provisions of the law where all positions of equal value are supposed to earn equal base salary. All contributors claimed the salary scale.

The problem in salary scale was sensed by all the civil service officials at all levels. They appreciated the current imbalance of market price and the civil servant earnings. However, the higher officials at bureau level justified that as it needs to balance such salary scale vertically and horizontally across the civil service systems and other public agencies. For this reason, some of them also replied that as currently the national government is working on that. Though public servants turnover can be resulted due to many reasons, however, the poor conducive working environment in government bureaucracy facilitates to leave experienced and qualified professionals from an organization. To this regard, public servant turnover in Tigray Regional state was very high in from year to year. The following figure illustrates this logical argument. Therefore, if continued the regional government will lose its industrious civil servant to implement it development agenda.

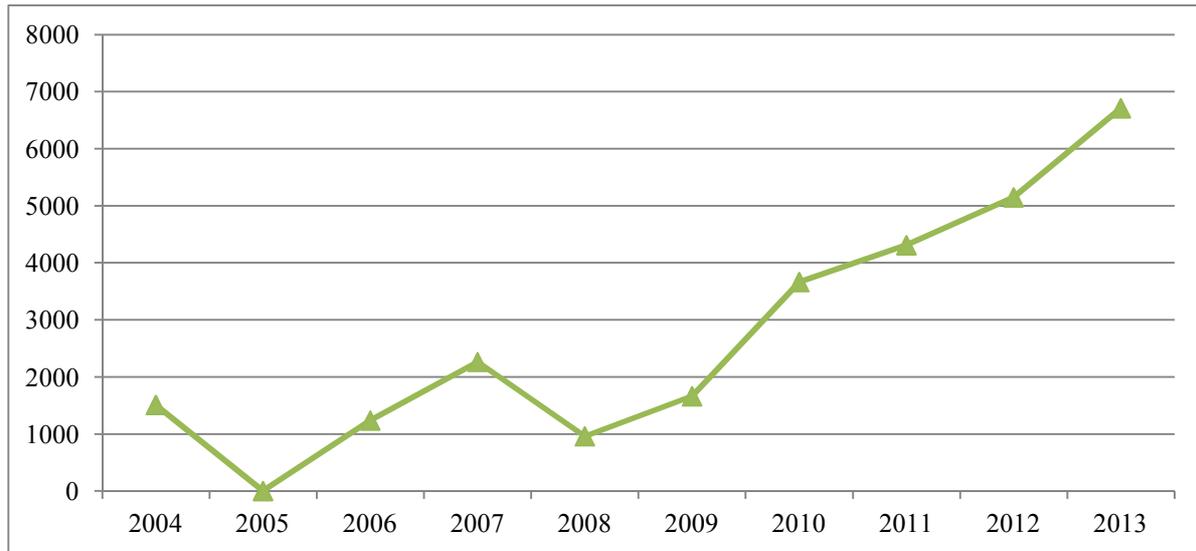


Figure 4: Civil Servant Turnover in Tigray

Source: Tigray CSB HRM core process owner, 2013/14

From the discussion, we can observe that the satisfactory merit system was examined by the public and as has discussed, the civil servant themselves were at most rejected the merit based HRM of the study area. Though it needs further research, the high turnover in the civil service was also may be due to the above poor conducive working environment. Therefore this needs a special attention to work-on it.

### 3.3. The Practical Challenges of Human Resource Management in Tigray Region

The HRM sub reform program in Tigray was launched to create relatively autonomous, performance-oriented and responsive civil service organizations. It aimed at build a merit-based and politically neutral, well-structured, well-paid, well-trained, representative, accountable and relatively corruption-free civil servant. Nevertheless, as depicted in Figure 5, the practical challenges to implementing the CSR were found to be fraught with deeply-rooted political interference and poor accountability system in the HRM.

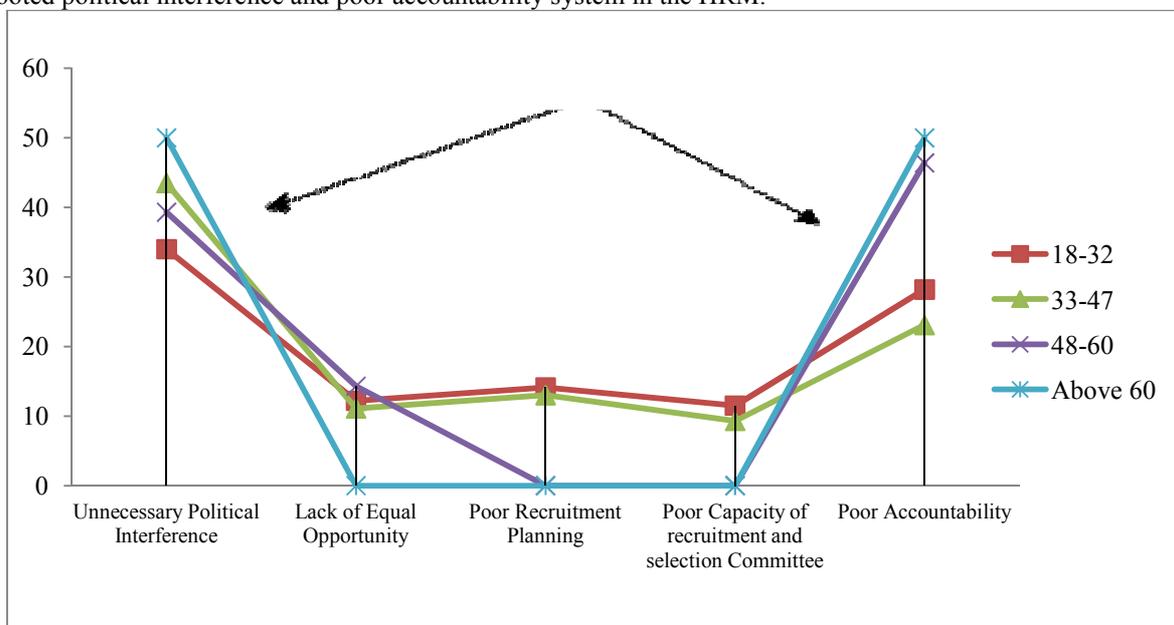


Figure 5: The Practical Challenges of Merit Based Recruitment and Selection

Source: Field Survey, 2013/14

In Tigray, as in the national agenda to overcome the pitfalls in the civil service, civil service reforms were introduced to restructure and modify the civil service systems. Nonetheless, irrespective of the smart policies, strategies, rules, regulations and proclamations, if they are not properly implemented, the well-bound whitepapers of such government directives cannot be fruitful. As indicated in Figure 23, the unnecessary political interference and poor accountability system in recruitment and selection were identified as the most

vexing challenges to properly implement the CSR. De-politicization of the civil service has been a desirable goal of any government. Civil service de-politicization is about the goodness of merit-based HRM and the avoidance of unnecessary political dogmatism. To this regard, respondents were asked to describe their observation about the most practical challenges of civil service de-politicization and Table 5 illustrates their opinion.

Table 5a: Sex \* The Most Practical Challenges of Civil Service De-politicization Cross-tabulation

			Challenges of Civil Service De-Politicization					Total
			Unnecessary Political Interference	Ill networking in the civil service	Poor Accountability	Poor over sighting from above	Poor separation of power	
Sex	Male	Count	75	24	26	21	46	192
		% within Sex	39.1%	12.5%	13.5%	10.9%	24.0%	100.0%
	Female	Count	42	11	10	7	32	102
		% within Sex	41.2%	9.8%	10.8%	6.9%	31.4%	100.0%
Total		Count	117	35	36	28	78	294
		% within Sex	39.8%	11.9%	12.2%	9.5%	26.5%	100.0%

Table 5b: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.541 <sup>a</sup>	4	.472
Likelihood Ratio	3.601	4	.463
N of Valid Cases	294		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 9.71.

Source: Field Survey, 2013/14

Table 5 summarizes that unnecessary political interference (39.8%), poor separation of powers (26.5%) and poor accountability (12.2%) were of the most serious challenges of civil service de-politicization respectively in Tigray region. Both male and female respondents rated these problems at a relatively same rate from one to three. The Chi-Square test also indicates that, the Pearson Chi-Square value of 3.54 with a significance value or (P-value) of .472 which is >0.05. This means that we reject the null hypothesis as it was statistically insignificant and we accept the alternative because there was a significance difference between the perceptions of both sexes on the practical challenges of civil service de-politicization. Both male and female respondents were more likely observed the practical challenges of civil service de-politicization at different level. Hence, the neutrality assumption of the civil service was more likely challenged by unnecessary political interference, ill-conceived networking practices, poor accountability system, and poor oversight from high officials and poor separation of powers in the civil service. Similarly, civil service institutions are multi-functional and structured organizations established to operate government policies and strategies under some degree of political control and accountability. However, the political control should not be confused with unnecessary political interference in civil service matters. The other practical challenge in the HRM was the way civil service performance appraisal was conducted in Tigray.

During the strategic implementation of the CSR in Tigray, BSC was initiated as a stretched plan to measure organizational performance, departmental success and individual attainment on the bases of pre stated standards and objectives. Nonetheless, the effectiveness of performance appraisal was affected by lack of consultation and consensus building among appraisers and those appraised on the performance measurement criteria and inadequate corrective measures.

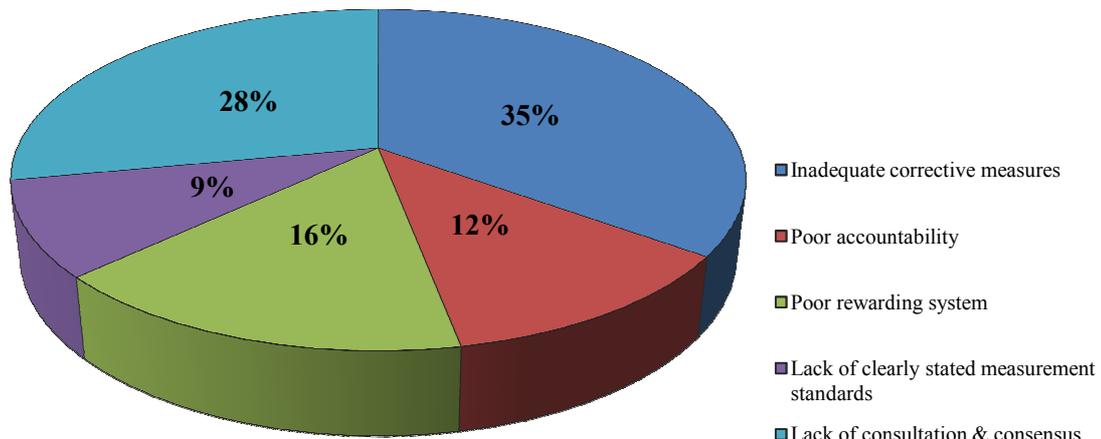


Figure 6: The Most Practical Challenges of Performance Appraisal

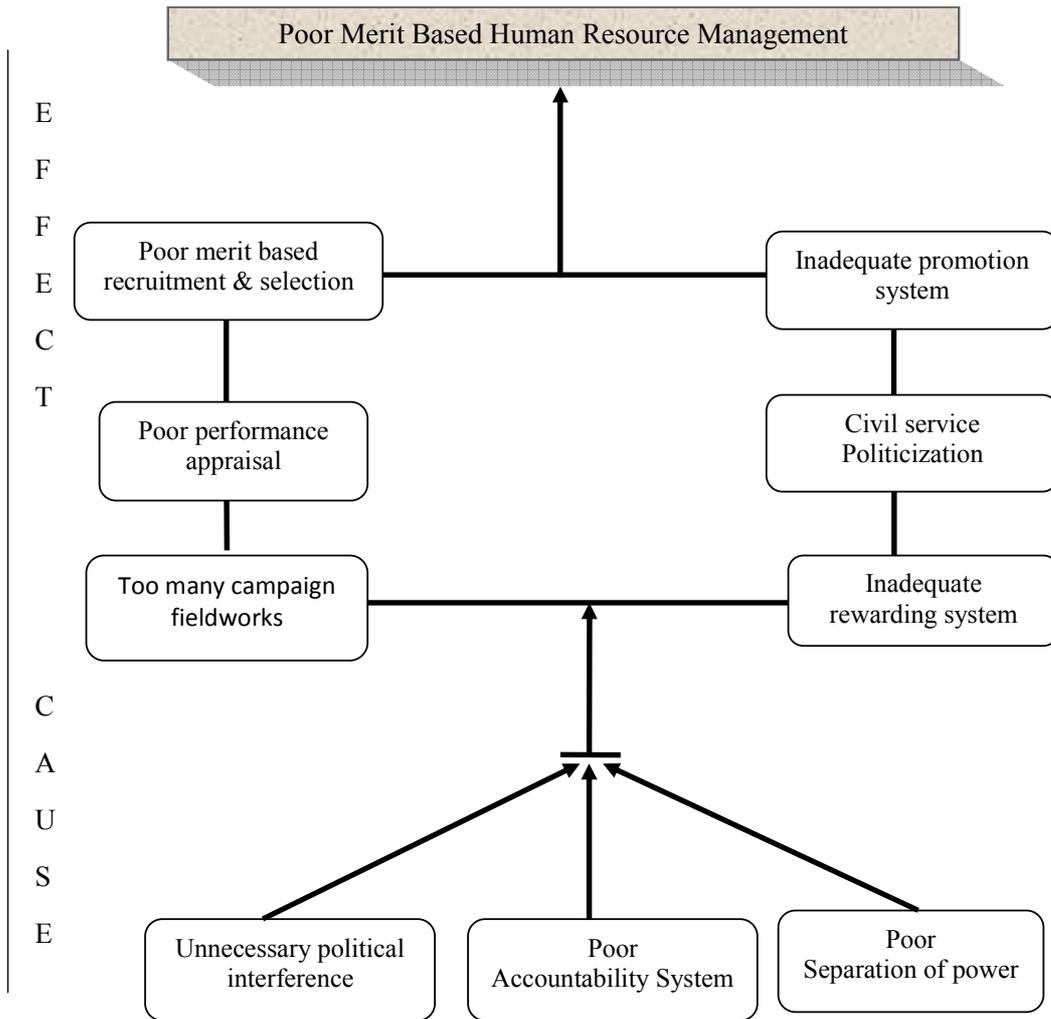
Source: Field Survey, 2013/14

As illustrated in Figure 6, of the different inhibiting factors during the application of performance appraisal, the respondents identified inadequate corrective measures against low performers and lack of consultation and consensus building among appraiser and those appraised were the most serious challenges. Similarly, as has been discussed under the merit-based HRM, the most widespread challenge identified was the appointment of acquaintances and personal favorites without a competitive process. The poor salary index of the civil servants with its poor application of performance pay was also recognized as one of the most practical inhibiting factors.

#### 3.4. The Root Causes of the Inhibiting Factors to Implement the Merit Based HRM

The implementation of government policies and strategies can be affected negatively by different inhibiting factors. However, “the but why?” questions should have to be answered. Governments and the academic societies have been seen when assessing and researching the inhibiting factors. Looking into the root causes of the problem helps to focus on the causes instead of its symptoms. Hence, during the implementation of the CSRs, there is need to examine why inhibiting factors exist and to find the right solutions. As asserted by International NGO Training and Research Center (2008), recognizing an authentic solution for a problem means knowing what the real causes of the problem are in the first instance. However, taking action without knowing what factors contribute to the problem can waste time and resources.

The West Africans says that, “If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk together.” Therefore, to put into practice the merit based human resource management and to implement the civil service reform in Tigray region as effective as possible, there should be joint, holistic and sound solutions found, and for expediency, root causes of the inhibiting factors should be identified. Figure 7 depicts the cause and effect of the implementation process and sums-up the discussion on the root causes of the inhibiting factors.



Source: *From the Discussion of This Document*

### 3.5. Conclusion

From the overall discussions of the study, the Root Causes of the factors that inhibited the effective implementation of merit based HRM in Tigray Region was therefore unnecessary political interference, Poor separation of power and Poor Accountability System.

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