



HRD Practices in Civil Service Sector in Ethiopia: A Study of Civil Servants in Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State(BGRS)

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Abstract

In this changing economy, it is a well established and recognized fact that, HRD has a positive effect on the survival and sustainability of the organizations. However, evidence shows that, civil service sector in developing countries, including Ethiopia is expected to do more in terms of HRD to address the challenges of globalizations effectively. This research is, therefore, aimed at examining the HRD practices in civil service sector bureaus in Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State, Ethiopia. In order to address the objective of the study, a descriptive survey method was employed. The population of the study was 3,228 civil servants working in the 35 civil service bureaus in the region. The sample size consists of 15 bureaus and 383 civil servants. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. The data of the study were analyzed using SPSS to address the questions under the study. The findings indicated that, the implementation of HRD systems was unsatisfactory. All the selected elements of HRD such as training; performance appraisal; career development; civil service change army; employee welfare and reward system were poorly effective in the selected bureaus in the region. On top of the findings, recommendations are forwarded to address the problems.

Key words: Bureau; Civil Service; Civil Servants; HRD practice

Introduction

The performance disparity between organizations largely depends on the development level of their human resource. The commitment of the human resource towards the goals and aspirations

of the organization relies on how they are developed (Armstrong, 2008). Without developing human resource, it is rarely possible for any organization to survive, sustain in the current competitive economy (Wilson, 2004). As such, in the civil service sector of any country where various developmental policies and strategies are implemented, HRD has been found to have a positive effect on improving the effectiveness of the bureaucracy and policy implementation; which, in turn, enables a country to achieve, with relative ease, the socio-economic progress that is the brand of a developmental state.

Benishangul-Gumuz region, one of the regional states in Ethiopia is categorized as one of the emerging states, mainly due to its low development level of human resource (MoFA, 2007). Since the establishment of a federal government system in Ethiopia in 1995, the region enacted various ambitious personnel policies that give high attention to HRD (BoPSHRD, 2015). The region commenced the civil service sector reform under the public sector capacity building program in 2005 and has been implementing a good number of highly motivated government HRD programs in the civil service sector, such as human resource management reform, top management reform, public service improvement reform, expenditure management and control reform and service ethics reform (Ibid). The very aim of the civil service reform was to enhance the capability of the civil servants and thereby improve public service. Significant training about the reform programs, service delivery, government policies and strategies, planning and report writing and decentralization have been provided for the civil servants in different organizations (BoFED, 2015). Besides, the region has come through structural reforms in the civil service sector and currently been implementing the BPR, BSC, KAIZEN and change army with the overall objective of enhancing the capability of the civil servants that provides quality public service.

Empirical research findings reveals that, developing countries faced the challenges of adapting the civil service sector to the changing economy. Abdullah (2009) in his study portrayed that civil service organizations in developing countries are poorly staffed for working requisite professionals those are not able to face organizational changes effectively. Also, George (2009) in his study disclosed that, absence of effective HRD systems in the civil service sector couldn't support civil servants to master technical and entrepreneurial skills to innovate new ways of doing jobs. The study by Mulatu and Narandranath (2013) on the perceived HRD climate in the public sector in Ethiopia revealed that, the existence of very poor HRD practices in the public

sector is responsible for employee under development. Besides, Desalegn (2010) in his study has come out that, the Ethiopian electric power corporation employees perceived the HRD practices in the corporation as not need based. Furthermore, one of the most recent studies by Tilahun (2017) on the impact of the capacity building in BGRS revealed that inadequate skilled human resource, rampant corruption and insufficient commitment of top management towards HRD were the problems facing the implementation of policies and strategies in the civil service sector in BGRS.

The official reports in the region also revealed that the existing practical setting in the BGRS hasn't portrayed exact progress in the civil servants' skill, attitude, commitment and motivation as expected. Problems in the form of motivation, commitment and serious capacity gap are highly observed among civil servants (Mulatu and Narandrath, 2013; BoFED, 2015). The problems pertaining to civil servants' capacity in the region indeed call for a research to look into the gaps and suggest for regional self reliant. In fact, various researches had been conducted on the HRD practices and climate. Most of these studies, however, focused on private organizations and public enterprises in Asian countries, particularly in India. So far, a few studies were conducted on HRD in Ethiopia, but none of them brought all together the elements of HRD, such as training and development; performance appraisal; reward systems; employee welfare; civil service change army and career development in the civil service sector in general and specific to BGRS. Thus, this study proves to state the issue as "To what extent the elements of HRD are practiced in the civil service sector in BGRS"?

Review of Related Literatures and Studies

Attempts made to define HRD by academics, researchers and practitioners revealed that the concept is still confusing, elusive and debatable (McLean & McLean, 2001; Rao, 2014). The process of defining HRD is confused over the philosophy, purpose, location and language of HRD. Elusive is created through the lack of depth of empirical evidence of some of conceptual aspects of HRD. The debate arises by apparent lack of boundaries and parameters of HRD. This is further complicated by the epistemological and ontological perspectives of individual stakeholders and commentators in the HRD arena (Werner & Desimone, 2012).

The concept HRD was formally introduced for the first time by Nadler for the 1969 American Society for Training & Development/ASTD conference, and he defined it as "... a series of

organized activities conducted within a specified time and designed to produce behavioral change” (Nadler, 1969).

According to Pareek and Rao (1981), HRD in the organizational context is defined as a process by which the employees are refined to: obtain capabilities required to perform various functions associated with their present or expected future roles; develop general capabilities as individuals discover and make use of their own internal potentials for their own or organizational development purposes; and develop an organizational culture as supervisor-subordinate relationships, work in a team and collaboratively among sub-units so as to have a say to the professional well-being, motivation, and job satisfaction continuously in a planned ways. According to Werner and Desimone (2011), HRD can be defined as a set of systematic and planned activities designed by an organization to provide its members with the opportunities to learn necessary skills to meet current and future job demands. Thus, HRD helps employees in an organization to develop competency requests to carry out all the functions effectively and support the organization in performing well. The effectiveness of HRD in an organization requires the implementation of various integrated elements of HRD- training and development, performance appraisal, reward system, career development, reward system and civil service change army.

Rao and Abraham (1986) who have conducted a survey on HRD practices in Indian Industries indicated the existence of a positive trend in the use of an open appraisal system, improving training function, organizational development and employee counseling. But, a potential appraisal and development, reward administration and promotion decisions were found to be at low levels. **Rao, Rao and Yadev (2001)** in their research found that the HRD function in the selected 12 organizations in India was not well structured, adequately differentiated and sufficiently staffed. Moreover, the study by **Rao (2004)** examined HRD as National policy in India and indicated that although India took the leading in the Asia Pacific region, setting up a full ministry of HRD, the national HRD concept in India had largely been limited to education and culture.

Tegene (2008) analyzed the HRM practices in the civil service sector in Southern Nationality, Nation and People regional state in Ethiopia and showed that, the promotion, performance assessment, reward system and training were performed weakly in the region. **Desalegn (2010)** examined the HRD Practices in Ethiopia Electric Corporation and revealed that employees perceived HRD practices unfairly focused on some work units and concluded that the HRD was

not need based. **Mesfine (2011)** examined the federalism and conflict management in BGRS and reported that, the participation of the indigenous people in the civil service sector was very low and have not educated enough to join the civil service sector. **Chemeda (2012)** found that, the performance appraisal in Ethiopian higher institutions was merely focused on controlling purpose and missing its development direction like a reward, training and development, motivation and a competitive working condition. **Dagmawit (2013)** in her study in Ethio-Telecom revealed that, unclear performance standards, lack of ongoing performance feedback, rater's error and merely administrative focused performance appraisal. **Gebre and Nigussie (2015)** in their study of the role of change army as the new face to modernize civil service organizations in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia reported the change army was not internalized across the civil servants and leaders, some employees connote it as part of political instrument. The celebration of success to honor the civil honor was also poorly practiced. Moreover, they identified unfavorable working conditions (lack of staff lounge, poor transportation and freedom of work) and mismatch between workload and benefits challenged the change army.

Furthermore, the study by **Mulatu and Narandranath (2013)** on HRD climate and job satisfaction in the public sector in Ethiopia found a very low level of HRD practices in selected public sector organizations. **Simachew (2014)** examined HRD practices and challenges in public sector in the Tigray region in Ethiopia and indicated that, the government bureaus in the region were not practicing training and development, career development, organizational development and performance appraisal in a good way so that concluded that, the HRD practice was found on a low level. **Tagesse, Admasu and Eyoel (2015)** in their research on training and development practices in the Gedo Zone in Ethiopia found that, the training and development practices faced problems, including poor needs assessment, lack of training policy and system, insufficient resources allocation and management support.

One of the recent studies by **Tilahun (2017)** on the capacity building in BGRS reported, inadequate skilled human resource, rampant corruption and lack of top management support in HRD were the problems faced in implementation of policies and strategies in the civil service sector in BGRS. Moreover, the study indicated that the capacity building support from the central government and the neighboring states was not as such supportive in enabling the BGRS at self reliant stage. At the last, the study by **Worku (2017)** indicated that the attention given to

employee welfare measures and facilities in Ethiopia public enterprise was smaller and inadequate.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study was to determine the extent of HRD practices in the civil service sector bureaus in BGRS.

Under this broad objective, the following two specific objectives were derived:

- To determine the extent to which various elements of HRD are practiced in the civil service bureaus in the region.
- To find out if there is a significant difference in the HRD practices among civil service bureaus in the region.

Materials and Methods

In this part of the study, the methodological structure, methods of data collection, tools of data gathering, sampling design and data analysis techniques were included. As far as this study is concerned, about employees' perceptions of HRD in the civil service bureaus, it is descriptive research in type that deployed mixed research approach. Data were collected from primary and secondary sources. The primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire on a five-point scale that was adopted from the questionnaire developed by Rao and Abraham (1986).

The study area is Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State, one of the nine regional states established in the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in 1995. It is located in the North-Western part of the country. This region shares an international boundary with Sudan and South Sudan. Besides, it shares administrative boundary with Amhara, Oromia and Gambella regional states of Ethiopia. The region has 22 districts that are categorized under three administrative zones and three town administrations; Assosa, Metekel and Kamashi. The capital city of the region is Assosa where the regional civil service sector bureaus have established to execute economic and social affairs. Accordingly, the population of this study was 3,228 civil servants in the regional bureaus. Stratified sampling technique was used to select the bureaus and the civil servants. First, stratified random sampling technique was used to select 15 bureaus from 35 bureaus grouped under three sectors. The sampled bureaus included the bureau of Regional Council; Justice; Ethics and Anti-Corruption; Supreme Court; Environment, Forest and Land Administration/BoEFLA; Agriculture; Trade, Transport and Industry; Revenue; Finance and Economic Development/BoFED; Technical, Vocational and Enterprise Development/BoTVSED; Public

Service and HRD; Management Institute; Health; Education and Government Communication Affairs bureau.

The key participants of the study were civil servants. The researchers have a strong conviction that, the civil servants have practical experiences on the problem under the study. Using the Khotari (2004) formula the total sample size determined was 413 civil servants from the selected 15 bureaus in the region. Stratified random sampling also used to select the civil servants from the sampled bureaus.

To make the data collection reliable and valid, preliminary discussion was made between the co-research scholars and the Research Director at Andhra University and finally the reliability was tested using SPSS. The Cronbach's Alpha was found to be 0.91, which was in the accepted range. Thus, based on the 383 usable responses, the data analysis was carried out using SPSS version 20. Descriptive and inferential statistics, like mean, standard deviation and ANOVA were conducted to analysis the data so as to address the objectives of the study.

Results and Discussion

Before to analysis, the assumption of normality of the data was tested using skewness and kurtosis and the results presented in the Table 1:

Table 1: The normality test for the elements of HRD practices

Dimensions	N	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Training and development	321	-.216	.136	-.531	.271
Performance appraisal	321	-.221	.136	-.792	.271
Employee welfare	321	-.294	.136	-.506	.271
Reward system	321	-.101	.136	-.710	.271
Civil service change army	321	-.228	.136	-.398	.271
Career development	321	-.111	.136	-.152	.271
Valid N	321				

Source: Researchers Field Survey Result (2017)

The skewness and kurtosis were used to measure the normal distribution of data (Table 1). Skewness is a measure of symmetry of the distribution of data, whereas kurtosis is a measure if the data are heavy-tailed or light-tailed relative to the normal distribution. The skewness value for perfectly symmetrical of data is zero, and any symmetric data should have a skewness near zero. The accepted range for skewness and kurtosis is (Z values -1.96, +1.96). Though, some

suggested for skewness and kurtosis, (-1, 1) or/and (-2, 2) acceptable ranges of normality of data (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). Therefore, the results of the present study revealed that, the values for Skewness and kurtosis are in the accepted range; so that, the assumption of normality was confirmed and the data fit for further analysis.

The first objective of this study was to investigate the extent to which elements of HRD practices in the civil service sector in BGRS. To testify this, descriptive statistics-mean and standard deviation were used and the results presented in Table 2.

Table 2: The one sample t-Test of dimensions of HRD climate

Dimensions	N	Mean	%	S.D.
Training	321	2.80	45.00%	.513
Performance Appraisal	321	2.82	45.50%	.482
Employee Welfare	321	2.60	42.00%	.609
Reward System	321	2.54	38.50%	.579
Civil Service Change Army	321	2.74	43.50%	.532
Career Development	321	2.79	44.75%	.359

Source: Researchers Field Survey Result (2017)

The mean value analysis results(Table 2)entailed, all the elements of HRD, obtained smaller than expected mean values, indicating the respondents' perception towards the HRD practice is below an average value 3 [50%] on a 5 point intervals. Accordingly, the mean value of training was (M=2.80, SD=.51). The problems contributed to the weak performance of training includes lack of training need identification, insufficient training opportunities, unfairness and nepotism and lack of evaluating the results of training. Moreover, training provider institutions, such as management institute and bureau of public service and HRD were evaluated poorly staffed with competent staffs those are not able to provide trainings.

The result of this study supported the studies by Tegene(2008), Desalegn (2010), Gebere (2013), Simachew(2013) and Tagesse et al. (2015)those all reported poor training performance in the Ethiopia government sector different organizations and shows strong evidence that the current training activitiesin the civil service sector in BGRS has not adequately addressed the training needs of the civil servants as well the needs of the organizations.

The results of this study also revealed that the civil servants evaluated the performance appraisal at ($M= 2.81, SD= .48$), suggesting a low perception towards the performance appraisal practice. The civil servants performance appraisal identified to administrative purpose and neglected the developmental objectives in the region. The civil servants perception towards the objectivity, standards, feedback and transparency of performance appraisal were highly contributed to the weak performance of performance appraisal in the civil service sector. The civil servant performance appraisal system also perceived highly affiliated of the political ideology of ruling party.

This result aligned with the studies by Tagene (2008), Chemed (2012), Dagmawit (2013) and Simachew (2013) those all reported problems in performance appraisal practices in public sector different organizations in Ethiopia and shows confirmation that the current performance appraisal system and practice in the civil service sector in the region has missed developmental objectives.

The result of this study also indicated that, the civil servants evaluated the career development ($M=2.79, SD=.54$) and civil service change army ($M=2.74, SD=.36$) at low levels. The organizations support for career development, opportunities for career progression and civil servants commitment towards career development were identified factors affecting the career development. On the other hand, an unstructured change army system, low communication, lack of clarity regarding the concept of the system among civil servants and poor change leadership contributed to the weak practice of the civil service change army in the region. Moreover, the majority of the civil servants negatively associating the change tool with the ruling party political ideology and not willing to accept the change instrument.

The result of this study supported the previous findings by Simachew (2014) and Gebre and Nigussie (2015) that found ineffective career development and civil service change army systems in the public sector bureaus in Tigray region in Ethiopia respectively, and confirmed that, the ineffective career development civil service army systems in the civil service sector in the region.

The main problem areas of HRD practices that were identified in the survey were reward system and employee welfare. The civil servants perceived the reward system ($M=2.54$ and $SD=.58$) and employee welfare ($M=2.60$ and $SD=.61$) at the smallest mean values, implying problems of

employee services, better working conditions, financial and non financial rewards. The result of this study consistent with the studies by Chemed(2012), Worku(2017) and Tegene(2008) all reported poor reward system and welfare facilities in government sector organizations. Thus, it is possible to infer that, the reward system and employee welfare facilities in the civil service sector in BGRS have been ignored as subsystems of HRD system and not received the attention of the bureaus.

The second objective of this study was to determine if there is a significant variation in the extent of various elements of HRD practices across bureaus. To testify this, one way ANOVA was performed and the results presented in Table 3.

Table 3: ANOVA to elements of HRD practices among bureaus

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Training	Between Groups	8.36	14	.597	2.41	.003
	Within Groups	75.73	306	.247		
	Total	84.09	320			
Performance Appraisal	Between Groups	5.78	14	.413	1.84	.033
	Within Groups	68.70	306	.225		
	Total	74.48	320			
Employee Welfare	Between Groups	5.14	14	.367	.99	.461
	Within Groups	113.29	306	.370		
	Total	118.37	320			
Reward System	Between Groups	9.17	14	.655	2.04	.015
	Within Groups	98.26	306	.321		
	Total	107.43	320			
Change Army	Between Groups	5.73	14	.409	1.48	.117
	Within Groups	84.67	306	.277		
	Total	90.40	320			
Career Development	Between Groups	3.37	14	.241	1.07	.381
	Within Groups	68.57	306	.224		
	Total	71.94	320			

Source: Survey of the researchers (2017)

Prior to analysis, the assumptions of ANOVA were assessed. The normality was assessed with the examination of scatterplots and the assumption was satisfied. The homogeneity of variance was assessed by Levene's test of equality of variance; the results were not significant, verifying the assumption of equality of variance.

The result of ANOVA in the Table 3 revealed that, the training, performance appraisal and reward systems were significantly differed across selected bureaus. On the contrary, employee welfare, civil service change army and career development do not differ across bureaus. This confirmed that, the employee welfare, civil service change army and career development were consistently poor in selected bureaus in the region, while the training, performance appraisal and reward system varied across bureaus may be due to the dissimilarity in the support and participation of the bureau heads.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it can be concluded that, the HRD practices in the civil sector in BGRS were emerging. All the selected elements of HRD have been found to be weakly effective. The implementation of training; performance appraisal; career development; civil service change army; employee welfare and reward systems were found to be insufficient. The training opportunities have been found to be merely moderate, but identification of training needs and results evaluation inadequate. The training opportunities provided in the civil service sector do not address the actual needs of the civil servants. Furthermore, training provider institutions, such as management institute and bureau of public service and HRD were evaluated poorly structured and staffed with competent staffs those are not able to provide trainings effectively. The performance appraisal system has been mainly used for administrative purposes, such as promotion, demotion, transfer and salary increment and seems missing the developmental objectives. It is also concluded that the career development and civil service change army systems were ineffective in the bureaus and civil servants negatively associated the change tool with the ruling party political ideology and resist to accept the change. Furthermore, the civil servants were highly displeased with the employee welfare and reward systems in the civil service sector in the region.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the present study the following recommendations were drawn:

- The training opportunities have been perceived to be moderate, but not need based. Training providing institutions were also evaluated poorly staffed with competent professionals those are not able to provide quality training. The training function should be based on the

genuine identification of the needs and result evaluation. Training providing institutions have to be empowered with competent staff those are able to provide training effectively.

- The performance appraisal system has been perceived control oriented and politically affiliated. Hence, the region should develop development oriented performance appraisal system in the civil service sector that enables civil servants improve their current performance.
- The result of the study indicated that the current career development has been ineffective and employees have not been engaged in career development. For these, the bureaus should recognize a career development program as one of the HRD system in the civil service sector.
- The civil servants still have no clarity on the ideology of the civil service change army and negatively associating the system with the ruling party political dogma and thus not willing to accept the change tool. Thus, a well structured system should be established leading to effective communication with the civil servants to create clarity on the philosophy of the concept.
- Employee welfare and reward systems have been poorly evaluated by the civil servants. Hence, the region should develop well structured reward systems and employee welfare schemes in the civil service sector. The bureaus should provide programmes and facilities for the engagement of civil servants of the job and making bureaus more attractive and satisfying through conducting employee services and different reward mechanisms.

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