Public Administration in Ethiopia

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INTRODUCTION
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Public Administration in Ethiopia: Case Studies and Lessons for Sustainable Development

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Background and Objectives

In the West, scholars have identified four public administration/management models: Public Administration, Public Management, New Public Management, and Public Governance. The Public Administration model marks the first systematic and formalized approach to public administration (Van Dooren et al., 2015) and is characterised by Weberian features such as hierarchy, continuity, impartiality, legal-rational authority, and professionalism in public administration (Cheema, 2007). The Public Management model focuses on managing the public sector and is based on private management approaches and principles (Blum & Manning, 2009; Bouckaert & Halligan, 2008). The New Public Management (NPM) was the dominant model from the late 1970s to the late 1990s (African Development Bank, 2005; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017). It was driven by the leading proponents of the neoliberal economic ideal, which advocates the need to reduce the size of government, apply market-type mechanisms, and implement private sector leadership principles in public sectors to improve performance (Christensen & Lægreid, 2007; Van Dooren et al., 2015). The NPM traveled across the world, including to developing countries, and was diffused by many actors, including such transnational institutions as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the OECD, through their funding, research publications, and consultancy work (Andrews, 2013; Peterson, 2015).

New Public Governance (NPG) was introduced in the 2000s, partly due to the failure of NPM to deliver expected results (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017); to its unintended consequences, such as increased socio-structural inequalities, particularly in developing countries; and its dysfunctional effects on public
sector performance and accountability frameworks (Bouckaert et al., 2010; Christensen & Lægreid, 2007). This model emphasizes vertical and horizontal interaction and partnerships, as well as mutual accountability and responsibility, between and among the state, the private sector, civil society, and citizens and stakeholders who participate in joint efforts to achieve several societal objectives (Bouckaert & Halligan, 2008; Hughes, 2012; Steen et al., 2018).

Despite the expected variation, and despite the fact that all four models are Western models, they have been introduced by developing countries. Indeed, the literature shows that there are differences in adoption and implementation of reform programmes, even in the West (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017), which is partly explained by the differences in politico-administrative contexts (Ongaro & Ferlie, 2019; Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017).

Recently, some African countries such as Ethiopia, Botswana, Mauritius, Tanzania, Rwanda, South Africa, and Uganda have adopted the Asian Developmental State (DS) doctrine (Clapham, 2018; Edigheji, 2010; Evans, 2010; Mbabazi & Taylor, 2005; Taylor, 2005; Vaughan & Gebremichael, 2011). The African Union (AU) and the UN-ECA are also promoting the DS doctrine to ensure socioeconomic transformation in Africa (AU, 2014; UN-ECA, 2011). There is also a rhetoric on African consensus-oriented leadership/pan-Africanism leadership (Jackson, 2004), which accentuates the need to “correct the historical injustice” by strengthening mutually beneficial relationships within the continent and at a global scale (AU 2014, 10–11).

Moreover, African countries, including Ethiopia, have subscribed to the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aim to ensure “no one left behind” by 2030, an a goal also on the African Union’s agenda 2063 (AU, 2014). The UN (2015) claims governments are responsible for ensuring better economic, social, and ecological performance to safeguard the well-being of citizens. The failure to achieve sustained results on economic, social, and ecological dimensions not only threatens the well-being of citizens but also erodes the legitimacy and trustworthiness of governments.

The UN and the AU promote strengthening institutions, partnerships, and stakeholders’ participation in development programs. The UN SDGs 11, 16, and 17 are specifically related to public administration. Goal 11 focuses on inclusive, resilient, and sustainable cities and human settlements. Goal 16 and 17 focus respectively on building effective, accountable, and inclusive public administration at all levels, as well as on effective global partnership to revitalize sustainable development (UN, 2015; see also Bouckaert, 2020).

The winds of decentralization and democratization have blown in many African countries since the 1990s. However, the democratization and liberalization process has been uneven across the continent. Worse, it has
been scaled back in many African countries, partly due to the divide and rule of historical colonial legacies, which destroyed African civilizations; the increasing neopatrimonialism, authoritarianism, and suppression of opposition parties by the ruling party; and the gradual shift to a single-party state in many African contexts (Southall, 2003). Secondly, as observed by Kyed and Buur (2007), the ambiguous and sometimes the contradictory relationship between the indigenous institutions (indigenous leaders) and government institutions based on Western models is also an important factor.

At the same time, higher education plays a significant role in helping countries achieve SDGs; among other things, effective PA teaching and research not only generate relevant knowledge and increase graduates’ employment opportunities (Pinheiro et al., 2018) but also are crucial to strengthening institutions so they can effectively solve societal problems (Rosenbaum 2015). Bouckaert (2020) rightly claims the study of public administration should be concerned both with producing knowledge and with improving public administration and public policy (see also Ongaro, 2020). Therefore, how to ensure the relevance of PA teaching and research, how to organize PA teaching and research (Bouckaert & Jann, 2020), and how to attract competent PA students are crucial issues (Bertels et al., 2020). Accordingly, it is important to recall that the mere existence of higher learning institutions is not sufficient for national and reginal development. It also crucial to note that, as Newcomer and Allen (2015) rightly point out, PA teaching may vary in terms of missions, institutional locations, and the nature of the student population. It may also vary within countries and across regions, suggesting that effective public administration presupposes contexts that fit knowledge and solutions.

Nevertheless, while the applicability of Western theory to Africa is contestable from theoretical, policy, and managerial perspectives, most African universities rely on Western theories for teaching and research, including in the areas of public administration/management/policy. This could be due to the effect of colonialization and the fact that many Africans have got their education, among others fields in public administration, in the West (Kolisnichenko, 2015). The other fairly important factor could be the lack of sufficient publications by African scholars and practitioners. As Rugasira (2013) observes, while specific African problems have to be addressed by Africans, the contribution of African scholars to scientific publication is scarce, only 0.5 percent. As a consequence, most knowledge production on Africa comes from Western authors.

Public administration in Ethiopia can be analyzed over the three Ethiopian regimes: The Imperial regime (-1974), the Derg regime (1974-1991) and the EPRDF regime (1991-), with each having overlapping and unique features.
This book primarily focuses on the current regime but accounts for historical and sociological factors inherited from the previous regimes. The monarchical and highly centralized imperial regime introduced elements of Western public administration. The 1931 Constitution vested all ultimate legislative, executive, and judicial powers in the emperor (Clapham, 1969), who regarded himself as an elect of God and thus theoretically absolute and unchallenged (Clapham, 1969; Hiwet, 1975; Holcomb & Ibssa, 1990; Howard, 1955). The imperial parliament was instrumental in further centralization and suppression of citizens’ voices (Ayenew, 2019). PA teaching in Ethiopia started during the reign of Emperor Haile Sellassie in the 1950s at Addis Ababa University.

The Derg regime was also an exceedingly centralized government and adopted Marxist and Leninist socialist ideology (Adejumobi, 2007; Hiwet, 1975; Holcomb & Ibssa, 1990). The national shengo, the parliament of the Derg regime, was also substantially weak; meanwhile, the president was extremely powerful (Ayenew, 2019). Since coming into power after toppling the Derg regime in the 1990s, the EPRDF has introduced a series politico-administrative reform programs. Three major reform waves could be distinguished: regionalization, federalization and local decentralization, and federalization and Democratic Developmental State (DDS) doctrine. The first wave took place under the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (1991-1995), which established fourteen regional governments and entrusted the responsibility for public services to regional governments (Debela & Troupin, 2016; Peterson, 2015). During this period, the country adopted a neoliberal economic policy (Adejumobi, 2007). The 1995 Constitution established the federal government as having nine regional states and two city administrations, with the country officially continuing the tenets of the NPM doctrine (Mengesha & Common, 2007). In 2001 the second phase of decentralization occurred (Peterson, 2015; World Bank, 2013). In the aftermath of the relatively free but contested 2005 national elections (Abbink, 2006; Ayenew, 2019), the government officially adhered to the Democratic Developmental State (DDS) doctrine (Clapham; 2018; Lefort, 2012; Vaughan & Gebremichael, 2011). In general, the post-1990s reforms have been driven both by internal and external factors (Debela, 2017; Peterson, 2015).

Overall, since the 1990s, Ethiopia has registered impressive economic growth. Among other positive developments, access to education has increased and the number of higher education institutions and the students pursuing higher education has expanded many times over. Yet, inequality has remained a critical issue. Importantly, the democratization process and inclusiveness have been rolled back significantly. In the 2015 elections, the ruling party took all the national parliamentary seats, confirming that the
relationship between economic growth and sociopolitical development is not linear or automatic. Consequently and unsurprisingly, a few months after the national election the country was hit by mass protests, leading to the appointment of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in 2018.

Against this general backdrop, the chapters in this book analyze the contexts, processes, and results of politico-administrative reforms in post-1990 Ethiopia. The modest aim of this volume is to contribute to PA teaching and research in Ethiopia. The principal question of the handbook is: How can we describe and explain the contexts, the processes, and the results of the post-1990 politico-administrative reforms in Ethiopia and what are the implications for sustainable development?

From Projects and Conferences to a Handbook: How Did This Handbook Come About?


The seeds for this book were sown in 2012. That year, Geert Bouckaert (Flemish promoter) and Bacha Kebede Debela (local promoter) – with the support of Martine De Koninck (KU Leuven International Office) and Steve Troupin (KU Leuven) – developed a project entitled “Strengthening Institutional Capacity to Support Public Administration and/or Development Management Programmes at Ambo University.” Geert Bouckaert submitted the proposal for funding to VLIR-UOS and the project was selected for the second-round application. Hence Geert Bouckaert and Steve Troupin came to Ambo to participate in a workshop (August 27, 2012) and to jointly formulate the proposal. At the workshop, capacity building and the relevance of PA teaching and research stood out as critical issues, which were therefore systematically incorporated into the final project proposal submitted by Geert Bouckaert; this was subsequently selected by VLIR-UOS for funding in 2013.

The First National PA Conference (2015)

While part of the project activities involved the financing of PhD studies, other elements included the holding of workshops. Thus, on September 21, 2015, the First National PA conference was organized by Ambo University and KU Leuven, in collaboration with CCRDA, in Addis Ababa. The theme of the conference was “Governance for Sustainable Development in Ethiopia.” Interestingly, the participants (six universities with PA programmes and
practitioners [federal and regional equivalents], among others), stressed improving capacity-building and ensuring the relevance of PA teaching and research and ultimately agreed on the need to establish an interactive structure for dialogue on PA teaching and research in Ethiopia.

Consequently, on September 29, 2016, another interesting landmark was achieved. More than five decades after the teaching of public administration had been introduced in Ethiopia; the Ethiopian Public Administration Association (EPAA) was established at a founding conference, facilitated by Ambo University, KU Leuven, and Addis Ababa University. Fifty-one delegates from thirteen institutions participated. EPAA was officially launched on February 8, 2018, at Addis Ababa University.

The Second Project (2017-2020)

In 2017, capitalizing on the ongoing project and supported by Martine De Koninck (KU Leuven International Office) and Steve Troupin (KU Leuven), Geert Bouckaert (KU Leuven), Bacha Kebede Debela (Ambo University) and Frehiwot Gebrehiwot Araya (Addis Ababa University) developed a project entitled “Professionalizing Ethiopian Public Administration to Support Development Practitioners,” to be run jointly by KU Leuven Public Governance Institute, (Belgium), Ambo University, and Addis Ababa University. Geert Bouckaert (the Flemish promoter) submitted the proposal and the project was funded by VLIR-UOS and launched in 2018. Both projects were coordinated by Steve Troupin (KU Leuven), and Anneke Heylen (KU Leuven) was responsible for their financial/administrative management.

The Second National PA Conference (2018)

On September 22, 2018, the Second National PA Conference was organized on the theme of “Administrative Resilience for Sustainable Development in Ethiopia” by Ambo University and KU Leuven, in close collaboration with the International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS) and the Association of African Public Administration and Management (AAPAM), in Addis Ababa. Several papers were presented and discussed by participants, including EPAA members.

The Third National PA Conference (2020)

In 2020 the third National PA Conference was organized by Ambo University, KU Leuven Public Governance Institute, and Addis Ababa University in
partnership with the Ethiopian Public Administration Association (EPAA) and with the support of VLIR-UOS and the Belgian Cooperation to Development, on the theme “Strengthening Institutions for Sustainable Development in Ethiopia/Africa” in Addis Ababa, on January 24-26. Several participants, including EPAA members and the Federal Civil Service Commission Commissioner, took part in the conference and actively discussed the papers.

Based on the aforementioned projects and conferences, we invited the authors of the second and the third National PA Conference papers to submit improved versions of their papers for potential inclusion in this volume. We received twenty-six contributions, which were carefully reviewed and commented, with feedback sent to each author for revision. In the end, we received twenty-three completed chapters, the majority of them revised three times.

We believe the contributions in this book are not only helpful for PA teaching and research in Ethiopia but also witness the importance of strengthening effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions for sustainable development. Governance, institutions, and sustainable development were the core issues discussed at the three National PA conferences. Enjoy reading these chapters, and long live EPAA!

The Handbook and Its Chapters

The chapters in this handbook address a wide range of issues and are systematically clustered into five parts. Part II of the book focuses on governance, partnership, participation, and institutions. The contribution by Deribe Assefa Aga (chapter 2) is generic but arguably applies to Ethiopia. Using explanatory research design, he finds that democratic quality enhances public trust in government and that public trust in turn mediates the relationship between democracy and overall citizens’ life satisfaction. Belayneh Bogale Zewdie (chapter 3) uses exploratory research and shows the challenges and prospects of the Ethiopian developmental state in promoting democratic governance. The contribution by Aklilu Wubet, Challa Amdissa, Defferew Kebebe, and Frehiwot G/hiwot (chapter 4) reveals that the federal legislature of Ethiopia has various oversight tools at its disposal, but that among them it predominantly relies only on reports and committee hearings. Therefore, in the related contribution by Challa Amdissa, Defferew Kebebe, and Aklilu Wubet (chapter 5), we learn that public-parliamentary engagement is low, partly due to exceedingly limited institutional capacity. Hiwot Amare Tadesse and Trui Steen (chapter 6), using the most-similar-case study strategy, analyze
the impact of the developmental state doctrine on the functioning of multi-
stakeholder partnerships for health service delivery in Ethiopia. They conclude
that the state dominates and excessively controls stakeholders in health
service delivery. The contribution by Bahiru Detti (chapter 7) concentrates
on citizen participation and empowerment at the level of local government.
He finds local residents’ participation in development programs to be low
and that local development programmes have not substantially empowered
Ethiopian citizens. The contribution by Bacha Kebede (chapter 8) discloses
that much is to be done to shattering the glass ceiling and glass walls and
to increase genuine women participation in political and managerial jobs.
Drawing on the new institutionalism and the political settlement approach,
Hirko Wakgari (chapter 9) argues that the NPM-driven reform in Oromia
National Regional State is constrained by inadequate institutional capacity
(bureaucratic capacity) and an overly politicized bureaucracy and civil service.
A related contribution by Tewelde Mezgobo (chapter 10) highlights that
effective NPM-driven reform needs to break the one-size-fits-all path depend-
ency, and that there is a need for a sector specific approach and clarity on the
assumptions of NPM related reform tools. By comparing and contrasting
the indigenous Gadaa System and Western democracy Moti Mosisa Gutema
(chapter 11) reveals the difference in values and decision-making process
between the two systems.

Part III is devoted to people as human resources. Henok Syeoum (chap-
eter 12) examines meritocracy, career development, and promotion in the
Ethiopian Federal Civil Service. He reveals that despite the legal frameworks, a
prevalence of a mix of meritocratic and political patronage in the recruitment,
career development, and promotion in the Federal Civil Service. Similarly,
using historical neoinstitutionalism Bacha Kebede Debela, Geert Bouckaert,
and Steve Troupin (chapter 13) finds a shift from centralized HRM to a
decentralized system, a shift from seniority to merit and qualification, and
the systematic use of politico-administrative reforms and reform tools to
enhance the allegiance of civil servants to political executives in the Oromia
National Regional State. The chapter by Alebachew Asfaw (chapter 14)
examines the strategic contribution of middle managers in Ethiopian civil
service organizations. He finds that mid-level managers play a significant
role in the civil service and that they predominantly emphasize facilitation
and mentoring roles, followed by production roles, and change orientations
roles. Adare Assefa and Annie Hondeghem (chapter 15), using historical and
sociological institutionalisms, examine the leadership context of the Ethiopian
Civil Service. They argue that the continuous politicization of civil service and
the deep-seated sociological factors have led to the use of a predominantly
authoritarian leadership style in the federal civil service and yet at the same time resulted in a preference for a pragmatic leadership approach.

Part IV is devoted to performance and quality. Using Data Envelopment Analysis (DEA) reference technology Bacha Kebede Debela, Geert Bouckaert, and Steve Troupin (chapter 16) analyse the technical efficiency of twenty-nine towns in Oromia National Regional State in ensuring the drinking water supply. They find that the majority of municipalities were inefficient and the technical efficiency of the municipality depends on DEA model specifications. The chapter by Temesgen Genie Chekol and Denamo Addissie Nuramo (chapter 17) reveals that the cost and time performance of Ethiopian Mega Sugar Construction Projects is poor. Gutata Amante (chapter 18) assesses the performance of Ethiopia on general good governance indicators and finds the performance of the country to be inconsistent; he finds improvement in adherence to the rule of law, a decline in voice and accountability, and no significant change in the regulatory quality dimensions, as well as fluctuating trends in the remaining performance indicators. Kassa Teshager and Zekarias Minota (chapter 19) on their part reveal that organizational climate and individual factors are important factors for explaining public servants’ attitude and performance in federal public sectors in Ethiopia.

Part V addresses the governance of policies. Using the European University Association University Autonomy Scorecard, Solomon Gebreyohans Gebru, Annie Hondeghem, and Bruno Broucker (chapter 20) examine the institutional autonomy of Ethiopian public universities. They find the institutional autonomy of the Ethiopian higher education institutions to be low and suggest the relevance of the European University Association University Autonomy Scorecard to improve institutional autonomy and performance. Likewise, the contribution by Challa Amdissa Jiru (chapter 21) analyzes the outcome of the Ethiopian education policy since the 1990s. He reveals that Ethiopia has impressively improved access to education, but ensuring equity remains a critical challenge. The chapter by Kiflie Worku (chapter 22) is specifically on public administration education in Ethiopia. He finds several challenges, including inappropriate and inadequate PA staff educational profile and the employability challenges facing PA graduates.

The contribution by Wondem Mekuriaw (chapter 23) focuses on examining the implementation of community policing in Addis Ababa City Administration. He discovers that the implementation of community policing is modest, partly due to inadequate institutional capacity. He also point out that the government has used community policing to control citizens at grass root level. The other related study, by Dessalegn Kebede Kedida (chapter 24), explores the practices and challenges of community policing in Adama
Town Administration. Kedida discloses that limited institutional capacity, inadequate incentives for community police officers and limited community participation persist as major challenges to the implementation of community policing in the town. Finally, Bacha Kebede Debela, Geert Bouckaert, Meheret Ayenew Warota, and Dereje Terefe Gemechu (chapter 25) draw conclusions and implications for sustainable development and PA teaching and research in Ethiopia.

**How to Use This Very Ethiopian Handbook**

This Handbook is based on Ethiopian cases, which are researched by Ethiopian researchers, using Ethiopian (mostly primary) data. The Handbook is developed for teaching in Ethiopian PA programs by Ethiopian scholars, for Ethiopian masters and PhD students and researchers, as stepping-stones for their own research.

This Handbook invites the Ethiopian academic (PA) community, but also and even more the practitioners, to not copy-paste models that do not fit the context. The best guarantee for failure is to blindly copy-paste (Western) models, even if one can learn for a range of models. This Handbook invites practitioners and academia to push for research-based teaching using Ethiopian cases.

Seminars allow for the replication of some of the research, or at least for the critical discussion of methods, data, models, conclusions, and even recommendations.

It is our hope that this Handbook contributes to building capacity for better public governance. We hope that the volume inspires ideas to realize the SDGs in a resilient Ethiopian society, where “nobody is left behind.” For this, we need a public sector that is proactively matches SDG 11 (focusing on inclusive, resilient, and sustainable cities, and human settlements), SDG 16 (building effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions, with peace and justice at all levels), and SDG 17 (on effective global partnerships with the private sector, NGOs, and citizens).

**References**


