Development Management Institutes' Papers
Building Civil Service Capacity through Tertiary Level Education
The Ethiopian Experience

By: Abebe H. Gabriel
1. Introduction and Background

One of the profound changes that have taken place in Ethiopia since 1991 is the introduction of federal political structure that gave rise to the creation of nine regional states. With federal arrangement naturally emerged the necessity for self-administration by newly created states based on democratic principles enshrined in the 1994 Constitution. Such a move towards federalism, democracy and decentralization of the polity are essentially a major break from a long history of unitary statehood, dictatorial rule, and centralization of power. Hence, it took a lot of courage for the government to engage in such sweeping changes in the country. But, what complicates the process even more was that on the one hand the capacity demands for a successful and sustainable introduction of these changes were extremely enormous; on the other hand, addressing capacity requirements through the traditional ways had been structurally constrained.

Of the more than 300,000 civil servants, those with college diploma and above were very few (according to the latest statistics this is below 17%); and a disproportionately large proportion of these were concentrated in cities such as Addis Ababa. Hence, essentially the civil service system has been staffed with personnel that did not posse the minimum level of necessary qualifications; still in some of the newly created regional states such as Afar, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella and Somali, the situation has been extremely worse. In these regional states one could hardly talk of any capacity building rather than one of its creation. Therefore, it would have been foolhardy to assume that federalism, democratization and decentralization or socio-economic development in general would take any root without addressing the human resource development requisites.

It was with full cognizance of this fact that the Ethiopian Civil Service College (ECSC) started its functions in January 1995. However, its establishment as an autonomous higher education institution was enacted following a Council of Ministers Regulation No 3/1996 which was issued pursuant to Article 5 of the definition of powers and duties of the executive organs branch of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia Proclamation No. 4/1995.

ECSC was established not only to address the immediate shortage of professionals following the creation of the federal regions and the decentralisation of power, but also to build the capacity of the civil service at both the federal and regional government levels on a continuous basis. It was established with the legal mandate to operate as an institution of higher education catering to the training needs (at various levels ranging from short to medium and long term) of the civil service and to carry out research and consultancy services.

More specifically the following were the objectives stated in the Regulation:

1. with a view to enhancing the socio-economic development of the Ethiopian people especially to create conditions under which civil servants working in the Regions serve the people by training them in various skills and professions, to give special emphasis to women and backward regions in admission of students;
2. to search for, cultivate, preserve and transmit knowledge;
3. to provide education that fully develops the personality and strengthens the respect for human dignity, by promoting mutual respect, understanding, friendship and tolerance free from ethnic, nationality, sex, religious and other prejudices;
4. to inculcate the dignity of work and dedication for the well-being of the society;
5. to conduct research and studies on different fields and disseminate fruitful results thereof.

The Colleges mission could be summarized as playing a key role in building the capacity of the country’s civil service through education, training, research and consultancy services. In doing so, it gives special assistance to disadvantaged sectors of the society (regions, women) in their attempts to build their capacity in order to strengthen democracy, decentralization, good governance, peace and to attain rapid economic development.

At a conference of stakeholders held about three years ago, ECSC clearly defined its mission, set its vision and values. In order to be able to achieve its objectives of building the capacity of the civil service on a continuous basis and thus make a vital contribution to the development objectives of the country, it became apparent that the College needed to build its own capacity in a comprehensive way rather than through pieces and bits of project activities designed to strengthen the College.

Thus a comprehensive capacity building programme has been drawn. The programme consists of 13 components:

1. Building institutional structures
2. Needs assessment and market analysis
3. Strengthening mechanisms for client consultation and impact evaluation
4. ECSC capacity assessment
5. ECSC faculty and management capacity building programme
6. ECSC institutional evolution and establishment of a business planning system
7. Post-graduate programme development
8. Short course programme development
9. Research and consultancy capacity building
10. Partnership and resource networking
11. Information and library facilities
12. Strengthening public-private sector partnership
13. Gender equality and special assistance to disadvantaged regions

As a result of this comprehensive capacity building project, ECSC will be able to make significant demonstrated contributions towards:

1. improving the professional and technical performance of its civil service client; organizations (with special attention to urban planning and management, law, economics, development administration, management, accounting);
2. building a public service orientation in the civil service;
3. strengthening the collaboration between the civil service and the private sector;
4. balancing a strong orientation to participative bottom-up planning with fulfilling national development and sectoral strategies;
5. strengthening financial management, accounting practices, internal audit, and resource management accountability;
6. building the capacity of less developed regions and promoting greater participation of women in the civil service.

Following the clarification of its vision, mission and values, a Five Year Strategic Plan was developed in 1998 that broadly defined the major tasks that must be accomplished to effectively address its mission.
The College started in 1995 with just two faculties, namely, Business and Economics and Law. The Faculty of Business and Economics had only one department, Economics, and student enrolment in the two faculties was about 400 while, apart from some full-time Ethiopian and expatriate academic staff, most of the teachers were part-time. Today the College has three teaching faculties, two institutes – one for research and another for distance education, a number of academic departments and centres as well as administrative support divisions and units.

2. The training, research and consultancy programs

Degree and diploma programmes

ECSC now has several degree and diploma programmes in its three faculties. The tables below summarize the programmes.

A. Degree Programmes

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<th>Faculty</th>
<th>Department</th>
<th>Field of Study</th>
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<td>Business &amp; Economics</td>
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<td>Accounting</td>
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<td>Management Studies</td>
<td>Development Administration</td>
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<td>Law</td>
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<td>Urban Development Studies</td>
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B. Diploma Programmes

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<td>Business &amp; Economics</td>
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<td>Management Studies</td>
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<td>Law</td>
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<td>Urban Development Studies</td>
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Over five hundred students meeting the degree and diploma entry requirements (completion of 12th grade, passing the entrance examination, agreement to serve their sponsors for 7 years after graduation) of the College are admitted every year to the regular programmes. Another thousand participate in the short term training programmes. The evening diploma programmes also admit some 700 civil servants on yearly basis.

So far, over 3000 degree and diploma candidates of which about 2500 are degree students have graduated from the College. While a small percentage of the graduates are from federal departments the great majority have been from all the regional states. The graduates have all gone back to their respective regions.
C. Post-Graduate Programmes

Two post-graduate programmes have been launched over the last three years in the fields of Law and Urban Management in collaboration with higher education institutions in the Netherlands (respectively the University of Amsterdam and Erasmus University Rotterdam/Institute of Housing and Urban Development Studies).

**Master of Laws (LLM)**

One round of LLM course has been completed and preparations are now underway for the continuation of the programme for two more rounds. The collaborating institution is the University of Amsterdam while the Netherlands Government is providing the funding. The course takes about two years, including the dissertation work. To make the programme sustainable the training of ECSC’s five academic staff at the PhD level forms an important component of the project.

**Master’s in Urban Management**

The first round of Urban Management Master's degree programme was completed in November 2001. The collaborating institutions are Erasmus University Rotterdam and the Institute of Housing and Urban Development Studies, both in the Netherlands. It has been financed by the UNDP. A project for Subsequent rounds of the delivery of the Master's programme in Urban Management and capacity building which ensures sustainability has been drawn up. The project envisages the setting up of an Urban Management Center (for short term training, research and consultancy in urban management), curriculum development (for short courses, first degree and Masters training programmes) and training of academic staff at the PhD level.

Masters in Public Finance and Human Resources and Organizational Development

Two other projects for Master's level training in Public Finance, and in Human Resources & Organizational Development at the ECSC are also developed and expected to start in September 2003.

**Short Course Programmes**

Although so far greater emphasis has been given to diploma and degree programmes in the College, the development of short term training programmes is high on ECSC’s strategic development plan. An assessment of training needs is underway to identify and prioritise additional areas of training and services.

At present several short courses are being offered in the College. These have been courses on various aspects of law, management, finance and accountancy. So far the courses have in the main been delivered at the College with trainees coming to the College. Arrangements will be made for courses to be delivered outside the College in the regions and in collaboration with regional management institutes and others. At present more courses focusing on the civil service reform underway are being developed. Some of the courses given so far include:

- Accountancy (40 Hrs, 2 wks)
- Auditing (40 Hrs, 2 wks)
- Budgeting (40 Hrs, 2 wks)
- Bookkeeping (in collaboration with USAID and Ministry of Finance) 5 wks
- Personnel Management (25 Hrs, 1 wk)
- Materials Management (25 Hrs, 1 wk)
• Law (248 Hrs, 10 wks)
• Surveying and Drafting (300 Hrs, 10 wks).

About 2000 participants, mostly from the relatively disadvantaged regions of Afar, Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz and Somali, have participated in the various short term training programmes.

**Short courses available at the Distance Learning Center (Video-Conferencing; Internet)**

At the Distance Learning Centre of the Institute of Distance Education several courses are offered jointly with the World Bank Institute in Washington. This has been made possible thanks to the availability of the videoconferencing and internet facility on campus.

More than 1500 experts and employees from the Government (about 78%, NGO's 12% and the Private sector 10%) have participated in the courses and seminars. The participants have attended courses ranging from 3 to 6 weeks and seminars using the state of the art interactive video conferencing and multimedia facilities in the DLC of the Institute of Distance Education (IDE) of the College. Nearly fifty courses to do with Economic Policy issues, Poverty Reduction, Governance, Regulation and Finance, Human Development, Investigative Journalism, Urban Management, Fighting Corruption, Project Management, etc. have been offered so far.

**The Institute of Distance Education (IDE)**

Located in the Main Campus, the Institute of Distance Education is preparing to deliver distance courses in the print mode at diploma level, initially in Accountancy to be followed by Management and Law. The Institute has got a World Bank loan from the Learning and Innovation Loan (LIL) scheme of about US $ 5 million for years 2001-4. The aim of the project is to enhance the efficiency of both the public and the private sectors through a range of different distance learning programmes and to develop the capacity of the institute to manage the global development Learning network (GDLN) link and to develop appropriate printed distance learning materials.

The Distance Learning Centre (DLC) receives courses in various areas of study (as described in the preceding sections) via satellite from at the moment mainly the World Bank Institute in Washington. At the second phase of the project courses will be transmitted from the centre at the ECSC to centres outside Addis Ababa. Long term training programmes at the degree level, e.g. Master's, can also be arranged in addition to the provision of access to the internet and computer literacy.

**The Institute of Federalism and Local Government Studies (IFLGS)**

IFLGS has been established to conduct research related to problems in the civil service and carry out consultancy services with a view to achieving the larger goal of building the capacity of the country’s civil service system. It serves as the College’s research and consultancy wing generating information that will be made available for government (federal and regional as well as researchers) and used to develop training programmes and appropriate curricula. The Institute has two major areas of focus, namely federalism studies and local governance studies.
The Institute’s researchers in collaboration with the Department of Management studies have recently carried out two projects in training policy development and management development as part of the Human Resources Management sub programme of the Ethiopian Civil Service Reform Programme.

**Purpose and Focus of Research at ECSC**

ECSC has a very specific and focused mission. It aims to build the capacity of the Ethiopian Civil Service System in more than just one ways; undertaking research and providing consultancy services is one of them. The civil service system is undergoing through profound changes. In view of the fact that the civil service system has been plagued with multifaceted problems on the one hand and that it has been the least researched area on the other, undertaking research would be of paramount significance. However, domestic institutional capacity to undertake research and provide consultancy services has been quite limited. All these taken together would render the situation ripe and tempting to actively engage in research and consultancy undertakings. In fact, one could say that no other situation has ever been so conducive as is the case now to undertake research and consultancy for the civil service system in Ethiopia. What is more, government has expressed its commitment towards providing the all round support to enable ECSC to meet its aims as a training, research and consultancy centre par excellence.

As such, there could be several relevant, momentous, topical and fundamental focal areas for research and consultancy. However, the crucial and priority areas that have already been identified by the various reform programs and recent developments such as decentralization, democratisation, free market economy, etc., would remain the focal areas of research, hence the purpose of undertaking research and consultancy services at ECSC would basically be to support these.

To mention but few research and consultancy areas that ECSC would have to concentrate on are issues of:

- Urban management and planning
- Decentralization and local economic development
- Human resources and organizational development
- Public sector finance and financial management
- Tax accounting and taxation laws
- Various aspects of law including customary laws
- Federalism and local government
- Development administration
- Conflict management and handling
- Public service delivery and ethics
- Rural development and governance
- Democratisation and governance
- Policy analysis
- Civic societies and community development and management
- etc.

Among the opportunities that ECSC enjoys to effectively shoulder such responsibilities would include its staff development processes that led to the production of skilled human power in some key areas of expertise (e.g., urban management, law), its anticipation to pursue postgraduate training programs in Urban Management, Law, Human Resources & Organizational
Development, and Public Finance which would create additional capacities, the networks that it has established with sister institutions and the facilities that it has mustered over the years.

**Academic and administrative support departments and centres**

In addition to the above-mentioned faculties and institutes, the ECSC has the following academic and administrative support departments and centres:

- Extension Coordination Office (ECO) catering for the evening degree and diploma training;
- Centre for Professional and Management Development (CPMD) that organizes short term training programs;
- English department that enhances learners abilities of the English language – this is important in view of the fact that English is the medium of instruction at the College;
- Curriculum and Educational Technology Centre (CETC) that assists faculties in their endeavours to design and/or review their curricula and improve on modes of delivery;
- Entrance Examination Coordination Office (EECO) that coordinates the annual entrance examinations;
- Libraries
- Computer Centre that primarily expose students to the computer basics as users;
- Student Services – providing boarding, lodging, health services, guidance and counselling;
- Planning and Programming that assists units to prepare plans, and monitor them;
- Academic Programmes Office that coordinates academic processes;
- Research and Publication Office that coordinates faculty research activities;
- Registrar's office that handles students’ files, processes data, admission, completion, etc.

**Academic staff**

The number of academic members of staff has reached 150 of whom about 15 are expatriates. About 25 percent of the Ethiopian staff are first degree holders. Most of the Ethiopian members of the academic staff have Masters degree qualification. There are a few PhDs. Efforts are being made to train the staff at the Masters and PhD level. At present more than twenty of the College academic staff are pursuing their PhD studies abroad.

3. **Mechanisms for Enhancing Relevance and Quality of Programs**

**Relevance of the programs**

Apart from addressing the dire shortage of trained human resources for the civil service in the country, efforts are underway to make training programs relevant to address the various reform programs and socio-economic and political development in the country. There is a mechanism to ensure curricular relevance by continuously reviewing and updating through consultations with the stakeholders. This way, it has been made possible to introduce reform outputs as courses – for example, customer service delivery and public service ethics have been two of the five components of the civil service reform programs (human resources management, public expenditure and financial management and top management systems improvement being the rest). These were converted into courses and have successfully been introduced into the curricula. In other words, students must register for these courses and successfully complete them before they graduate. Similarly, courses such as FGE Systems of
Accounting are designed to respond to reform outcomes. In addition, the College has designed short courses in Customer Service Delivery and has been delivering it. The four areas of envisaged masters programs are not only appealing to the various reform programs but also help spearhead the processes – for example, Public Finance (for Public Expenditure and Financial Management component of the CSRP and tax reform), Human Resources and Organizational Development (for HRM component of CSRP), LLM (for Ethics component of the CSRP as well as for legal reform), and Urban Management (for decentralization and local economic development).

Moreover, some of the programs (not just specific courses) are designed to take account of current developments. For example, a department of Urban Management has been established in the Faculty of Urban Development Studies to serve as an institutional base for addressing training, research and consultancy regarding urban development. To this effect, it has been possible to organize training programs in various areas of urban management (finance, land management, service delivery, etc) for municipal councillors and urban managers. Degree level training in Urban Management is envisaged. This department has been an active partner of the government in research and consultancy in areas of urban policy, grading, capacity development, etc.

Short courses are designed in close consultation with clients through which their relevance is ensured. For example, the college in collaboration with the Ministry of Revenues and with Addis Ababa City Administration has designed short-term training programs in Tax Accounting and Auditing, and Tax Law – in which civil servants drawn from these organizations have been taking part. Modules are prepared in such a way that they capture essential elements of the reforms and delivered in a participatory manner. According to the feedback that the college gets, these training programs have been effective.

The research wing of the College, the Institute of Federalism and Local Government Studies, has thematic and focal research agenda organized into two units: federalism studies and local governance which are extremely relevant to Ethiopia’s situations.

Enhancing Quality

Curricula are continuously reviewed to make them relevant and meet acceptable standards. In the process, needs and impacts are assessed, consultations with stakeholders and other higher education institutions are made, teaching materials prepared and library facilities constantly improved. Staff development in profile as well as methods of delivery has been actively embarked upon; student support systems have been instituted; assessment and evaluation methods are constantly reviewed. After thoroughly reviewing all this the Ministry of Education has formally accredited all the programs offered by the College.

Similarly, a system of research appraisal has been put in place so that proposals are discussed at department levels, reviewed by faculties and prioritised by the Senates Standing Committee for Research, Consultancy and Publication. Submitted research reports are subject to both internal and external assessment processes to ensure quality and relevance.

College annually makes available research budget the allocation of which would reflects relevance, quality and equity. This money comes from internally generated resources and is meant to primarily cover expenses associated with the research activity. It ensures budgetary support for staff members who have researchable ideas that are relevant to college’s missions,
without which they may not be able to undertake. This is a novel practice, which is rarely practiced in other higher education establishments in the country. Moreover, staff are encouraged to compete for externally sourced funding, provided that the research topic falls within the relevance domain of the College’s mission.

Role of information technology in promoting training

Cognizant with the huge challenges facing the college, that is contributing the capacity building process for the civil service system in the country, and realizing that this challenge cannot be fully be met by following the traditional method of organizing training, the College has set up its Institute of Distance Education. The objective is to take education to where civil servants work and live, since relying on the opposite only cannot bring about any meaningful change. It is hoped to use cutting edge information technology to deliver distance education to regions – several regions could be linked via satellite with the college to benefit from the distance education program.

Follow-up mechanisms

Obviously program relevance and quality assurance are continuous processes that must be constantly gauged through follow-up mechanisms. As mentioned above, the college takes consultation with its clients quite seriously. It consults them with respect to the relevance of the programs being offered as well as new programs to be introduced. Hence, a continuous process of needs assessment is built into the system. Moreover, the college has conducted an impact assessment of its first graduates. It secured feed back from the trainees themselves, from colleagues of the trainees who are graduates of other higher education institutions, and from the employers/supervisors of the trainees. Despite the fact that the time elapsed between graduation and the time at which the study was conducted was too short (three years only) to see the impacts, the feedback obtained is encouraging. Of course, for the relatively backward regions, sheer number of college’s graduates was instrumental for without it situations could have been very difficult for them. But, even in those regions that are situated in a relatively better scenario, the performance of ECSC graduates were really good. Such feed-back mechanisms, significant as it were, will be strengthened in the future – to build on strong areas and reduce areas of weaknesses. In fact this is a key institutional capacity strengthening element that has been identified (including mechanisms for needs assessment and market analysis; strengthening mechanisms for client consultation and impact evaluation; partnership and resource networking).

An institutional arrangement has been put in place with clients to ensure a fuller utilization of the knowledge, skills and desirable attitudes acquired. This include a contractual agreement between employing organizations (Regional and Federal governments) and the civil servant who wishes to study at ECSC so that the employer sponsors the study and the civil servant agrees to serve the employer for seven years after graduation. So, far this arrangement has worked effectively.

Strategic alliances with African institutions of higher learning

The College has been trying to forge working relationships and mutual cooperation with institutions of higher learning both in Africa and elsewhere. Preliminary discussions and visits took place in several institutions of higher learning in Africa including the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (GIMPA); the Institute of Local Government Studies
While much remains to be desired in these areas, the college has benefited from the Memorandum of Understanding reached to with ASCON – with the effect that three professors of ASCON are currently working for the College.

4. **Concluding Remarks: Reflection on Challenges and Options**

ECSC is an accredited public higher education institution that offers training at different levels of qualifications in fields of study that are relevant towards building the civil service system of the country. It also undertakes research and consultancy services. Within a short period since establishment, it has grown both in terms of number and type of programs that it offers, size and profile of student body and staff, and services. It has been strenuous efforts towards making its programs relevant to the core mission of establishment as well as improving the quality of its programs and services. Some people in Ethiopia would ask ‘why should ECSC offer degree and diploma programs, and why shouldn’t it instead focus on short courses only?’ In countries where most of the civil servants meet the minimum qualifications, institutions of public administration and management may focus on short courses only. Well, for countries such as Ethiopia where the minimum level of qualification is essentially missing, short courses will have very little impact for successful reform implementation as well as modernizing the civil service. In fact, in some countries such as Germany where minimum level of qualification is not at issue at all, specialized universities exist to cater exclusively for civil service education.

Given the enormity of the capacity limitations in the civil service system of the country, and given the overarching reform programs that are being introduced to modernize it, it should be obvious that the expectations from the Ethiopian Civil Service College is quite immense. And, ECSC must rise to live up to these expectations by way of responding to these demands in a systematic and effective manner. The first step obviously is for ECSC to concurrently reorganize and equip itself to be able to build the capacity of others. ECSC has gone a long distance by way building its capacity and gaining useful experiences in designing educational programs and delivering them. It needs to build upon it so that it achieves its objectives at a higher level and wider scales.

The civil service reform underway in the country as stated in the policy document requires the development and implementation of various capacity building endeavours including the design and delivery of short courses in response to the various components of the civil service reform, viz. Top Management Improvement, Service Delivery Improvement, Public Expenditure and Control, Ethics Improvement, Human Resource Management reforms. There is no question about the fact that ECSC should be able to effectively design and deliver short courses as one of its major activities. Strengthening short courses at ECSC along its educational, research and consultancy activities, will enable it to play strategic role in implementation the civil service reform and in the continuous capacity building efforts of the country’s civil service system at large. Recently the college has set up a Centre for Professional and Management Development (CPMD) that will be responsible for organizing short courses in a purposive manner and in the process enhance skills of trainers in designing and delivering short-courses; put in place the necessary physical and educational facilities to effectively undertake in-service training; hence, respond strategically to various capacity
building intervention envisaged in the various components of the civil service system. There is a lot to do to successfully accomplish these endeavours in terms of diversifying coverage, improving quality through an innovative use of various educational delivery methods. These would require investment in facilities, capable staff, good management and organization.