

**POLICY ACTORS AND INSTITUTIONS IN THE POLICY PROCESS AT SUB-NATIONAL LEVEL IN
ETHIOPIA: THE CASE OF OROMIA REGIONAL STATE**

Nigussie Daba Heyi

School of Policy Studies, College of Leadership and Governance, Ethiopian Civil Service University

ABSTRACT

Drawing from surveys, interviews and archival documents, this article takes stock of key public policy actors and institutions in the Oromia regional state of Ethiopia. It sheds light on the regional level policy actors and institutions, policy analysis and its contributions to closing the gap between knowledge and policymaking. The study shows non-state policy actors do not actively participate in the policy making process in the regional state as the political space is limited while the participation of the ruling party, the executive and the federal government is high and influence the process of policy making in the state. The ruling party had monopoly on policy agenda setting in the regional state. The top level of government is controlled by group of elites from the same party which also restricts the participation of other actors. Raising the understanding level of the policy actors, building the policy capacity of regional states, establishing and strengthening policy research institutions, could solve the problem.

Key words: Public policy, Policy institutions, Policy actors, Policy implementation, *Oromia*, Ethiopia

INTRODUCTION

Citizens in a given country, essentially and skillfully, are influenced directly or indirectly by a broad set of public policies in the course of their everyday lives (Anderson, 2006). Anderson further states that public policies in reality are everywhere in a contemporary and multifaceted society. They present benefits and drawbacks, create pleasure, annoyance, and pain and jointly have significant consequences for the interests and contentment of the society. Public policies represent a considerable part of the environment in which we live. As a result of this, knowledge of public policies is very important for policy makers and practitioners. This also includes how public policies are developed, financed, implemented, and appraised. Existing institutional mechanisms need to fit for the implementation of sustainable development. Sustainable development also needs policy coherence to support governments interested in adapting their institutional mechanisms, processes and practices for policy coherence to implement sustainable development.

Public policy is a purposive course of action followed by actors or sets of actors usually related with government on a problem or matters of public concern (Anderson, 2006; Popoola, Olufemi O. (2007)). Atelhe and Akande (2006) elucidated public policy to mean a course of action or a plan of actions, which is selected from among several alternatives by certain actors in response to certain problems. Once taken, it guides behaviour, activities and practices and provides a framework for present and future decisions. Policies are formulated by certain actors to achieve certain goals and they consist of certain courses of actions to be taken in certain processes.

Policy process encompasses an intricate series of smaller processes. Specifically, it entails formulation, implementation and evaluation. Consequent upon the intricacies involved, specific crucial actors play roles in the policymaking process. Anderson (1990) classified the key actors in the policy-making process into two official and unofficial policymakers. The two categories of participants are involved in one way or the other in the policy process, and they are crucial and influential in the sub-processes of policy initiation, choices, formulation, implementation and evaluation.

Policy communities reflect a policy process where organized groups and government actors play a key role in determining the path and result of public policies. A policy community also replies to the growing disintegration and complexity of the policy environment in a plural society. As the policy setting becomes intricate, a single center of power would face challenge of managing the whole process (Fischer et.al. 2007). The political institutions determine who are the key actors, the payoffs to the actors, the deliberation in which they interact and the level of their interaction. Furthermore, each policy field has its own features that can escalate or decrease those operation costs.

The higher the political transaction costs, the more difficult it will be to make those side-payments and the more probable that cooperation will not ensue, leading to sub optimal policies. In other words where political institutions are well-developed, political actors will be able to cooperate so as to better adapt to economic and political shocks, resulting in policies with positive characteristics, such as stability, adaptability and public consideration. Where political institutions encourage great political transaction costs, cooperation becomes challenging and policies may be too rigid or very unstable and could tend to have more damaging abilities (Alston et. al., 2004). Policy actors are those individuals and groups, both formal and informal,

which pursue to impact the making and execution of the public policies. The part each player plays, and the link between actors, is what determines policy results.

Bureaucracy is one of the information sources for policymaking. However, it is challenged by the growth of alternate information sources to be the only sources on which policy makers rely. The growth of public interest and other advocacy groups challenges the role of administrative expertise in policymaking. Bureaucratic effect has been changed because policy actors are escalating proficiency is more spread, and conflict is more extensive (May, Koski and Stramp, 2015).

Effective governance and the transformative nature of regional states are important for sustainable development. It requires the regional governments to be able to work across policy domains, actors and governance levels. Sustainable development also requires coherent policy making to ensure a balanced approach to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of development. Policy making also requires considering complex, trans-boundary and intergenerational impacts, and different actions at local, regional, national and global levels.

Hence, the control of administrative knowledge has been challenged as interest groups have considerably recognized and are professionalized. The growing of think tanks, advocacy groups, research organizations and other information sources proposes a multiplicity of sources of information that run the range of issue advocacy, reporting and issue expertise. This study, therefore, seeks to examine the role of policy actors and institutions at sub-national level in Ethiopia: the case of Oromia regional state. The study explores about the regional policy actors and institutions, party politics and membership, policy analysis and community participation.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL ISSUES IN PUBLIC POLICY

The word policy could be conceptualized in different ways. It may be understood as a label for an area of action (for instance, health policy), or as an expression of broad rationale or the anticipated way towards a preferred circumstances of dealings, or as a particular plan, or as a decision of government, or as an official endorsement (example, legislation), or as a plan of action. People may also understand policy as outputs that governments in reality deliver, rather than what is pledged, or as outcomes which is in fact attained. It can also be understood as a theory or model (Kay, 2006).

Policy is "course of action, guiding principle, or procedure considered to be expedient, prudent, or advantageous" (McLain (1995:3). McLain indicates that policy is not only a particular set of actions intended to realize an objective, but also rules or principles that shape and guide actions. A policy is a *modus operandi* which is desired to realize specific societal objectives. Policy is not a decision but a course or pattern of activities.

Every policy and specifically, public policy is naturally and inescapably political. It entails political decisions, not only by political authorities, but also by an array of interest groups. The political decisions are also intricate as they call for evaluating of diverse needs and values within the restrictions created by an institutional structure. Policy decisions demand levels of collaboration, competition and disagreement in unbalanced arrangements. The results of policy decisions have genuine effects on the lives of the citizens (Maddison and Denniss, 2009). A public policy is a societal need that presupposes significance and suitably appraised for its real fulfillment (Chakrabarty et.al., 2003). It occupies a recognized and specific

public issue and the preparation of the condition to meet in a particular style. It envisages a line of action to realize certain goals.

According to Anderson (2006), policy is a somewhat constant, purposive guiding principle followed by a performer or group of performers in dealing with an issue of concern. This shows that policy is linked to purpose or goal-oriented activity. Public policies are designed to accomplish particular objectives and they generate specific end results. In modern political systems, they do not just happen.

Policy makers made countless efforts in the past decades to transform existing policies and institutions for social and economic changes to happen in their nations. However, the government employees in the modernizing government institutions have been squeezed between the unpromising administrative situations for reform and unsuccessful implementation of the reform. Consequently, it has now become clear that the policy and institutional reforms experimented in Africa have not worked as they did in the other parts of the world or in the West, although the attitudes and effects of the reforms in African nations still continue to be very strong (Larbi, 1999).

Policies also embrace strategies that can be implemented in due course by governmental authorities. Those strategies are not implemented in their separate and isolated decisions. As also explained by Cochran and Malone (1999), public policy is the study of government decisions and actions designed to deal with a matter of public concern. Dye (2005:1) defines public policy as "whatever governments choose to do or not to do". Kraft and Furlong (2010) also define public policy as what politicians, public administrators and citizens decide to carry out or not about public issues.

policies usually involve a series of interrelated decisions; rather than a single decision-maker, many different people at different levels and scattered throughout government organizations make public policy decisions; policies are shaped by earlier policy decisions and environmental factors; policies are mediated through their implementation; policies involve both actions and inactions; policies cannot be analyzed apart from the policymaking process; policies have outcomes that may or may not have been foreseen; policies are subjectively defined, and may be defined retrospectively; policies extend beyond the formal records of decisions; and policies need resources and action to be differentiated from political rhetoric (Kay, 2006:8).

From the definitions given by different writers it is possible to deduce that public policies result from decisions and actions of governments. And the driving force of public policy making is the government. The decisions and actions of non-governmental actors do not in themselves represent public policies. Hence, public policy is an alternative made by government to carry out some plan. We can also understand that a government may decide to do nothing (for example, not to increase taxes) or to sustain the status quo. Public policies can also be understood as a course of action or series of interconnected actions or decisions that are intended to solve various actual or anticipated problems of a society. Public policies are also formulated, implemented and evaluated by authorities in the political system such as legislators, judges, executives and administrators.

Policy Actors and Institutions

Public policy is the realization of independent, governmental authority. It also needs utilizing public resources and legal compulsion which cannot be performed by the private organizations. The authority of government and exercising this

authority for the advancement of the societal lives is the concern of public policy (Maddison and Denniss, 2009). As stated by Howlett and Ramesh (2003), actors and organizational variables are important factors to be considered in policy making. State institutions are also thought as essential institutional actors that affect the preferences and actions of other policy actors.

Policy is laid down, created and operationalized by a large number of individuals often referred to as policy actors. Mark Considine in Maddison and Denniss (2009) defines policy actors as 'any individual or group able to take action on a public problem or issue' (1994: 6). Policy is in fact prepared through a set of multifaceted interfaces between state and non-state actors. Institutions and processes have a significant role in creating different kinds of policy sub-systems (Howlett & Ramesh 2003; Maddison and Denniss, 2009) in which individuals have the potential to force, holdup, stop or adjust the passage of a policy from thought to implementation.

An institution is, in some way, a set of standardized patterns of human conduct that continue over time and carry out some important social task. The association between government institutions and public policy is very strong. ,"a policy does not become a public policy until it is adopted, implemented, and enforced by some government institution" (Dye, 2005: pp 12). Institutional theory underlines the official and authoritative features of government arrangement. Institutional models view how the governments are organized, their official authorities and their principles for decision making. The level of access to decision making granted to the community, the accessibility of information from the government organizations and the distribution of power between central and sub-national governments in federal system are the concerns of institutional theory.

A major principle of institutionalism is that the government organizations and rules create a big diversity in the types of policy procedure that takes place and the type of policy actors that are expected to be dominant (Kraft and Furlong, 2010). Public policy is confidently decided and put into practice by government organizations. The official organization, authorized authorities, practical rules, and bureaucratic tasks and actions are very important issues in institutional model of public policy making.

Furthermore, issues such as the legislative process and its dynamic aspects, the interaction between organizational composition and public policies, behavior of participants in political institutions and process have also got attention by policy analysts (Anderson, 2006). Recognized structural features of institutions are suitably utilized in policy analysis. The dissimilar patterns of conduct actually differentiate different institutions such as judiciary from legislatures, executive, public service agencies, etc.

In addition, the standardized guides of behavior i.e. institutional rules and structures can affect decision making and the substance of public policy. "Rules and structural arrangements are usually not neutral in their effects; rather they lend to favor some interests in society over others and some policy results over others" (Anderson, 2006: 24). Kraft and Furlong (2010) also state that different types of institutions such as private sector, individual business, central, state, and local governments, charitable organizations such as political parties and interest groups and foreign political governments can manipulate public policy of a given country.

In summary, institutions and their makeup, and procedures frequently affect the adoption and implementation of public policies significantly. They have also considerable effects on the content of public policies. They offer ingredient of the situation for public policy making beside to the more dynamic features of politics, such as political organizations, groups, and public opinion in policy field.

Elite Theory

Public policy could be seen as the choice and values of a leading elites (Dye, 2005; Stewart, Hedge and Lester, 2008). According to this theory, the public are unconcerned and are not well informed about public policy. So, in reality, elites shape the views of the mass with regard to policy questions more than the citizens influence the attitude of the elites. Elites may include economically powerful people, professionals, cultural leaders, elected officials, scientists and policy analysts.

According to Andrew (2007), elites participate in scientific enterprises such as creating valuable knowledge to the society. Scientific standards, applications of peer evaluation, and accrediting organizations are some of the activities of elites that help to sift the poorly educated from the incapable researchers. Examples of additional sources of pertinent, elite-based knowledge could be "the legal expertise of attorneys, the moral authority of religious leaders, the sharp pencils of accountants, and the contributions of many types of professionals all might contribute to better public decision making" (pp 162).

Elitist theory shows the dominance of the few, unrepresentative group of the people in public policy making. The dominance of the few also shows the challenges that democracy in countries of the world face. Different elites have also a tendency to control diverse policy fields such as foreign policy, defense policy, education policy, etc. There could also be a competition between elites to come first and get attention to their interests and to secure a higher level of support for their activities (Kraft and Furlong, 2010).

Stewart, Hedge and Lester (2008) also assert that public policy, according to elite theory, is directed top-down rather than being bottom-up and it does not stand for the interests of the majority of the people, rather it represents the values of the few elites. According to Kraft and Furlong (2010), the responsibility of diverse elites is predominantly obvious in the sub-governments or issue networks. This type of elite supremacy is partly a function of the low salience of policy making within these governments or issue networks. Most people remote from the narrow circles who are apprehensive about an issue, do not give attention to the policy issues. They do not also want to participate in and contribute to the policy decisions. Similar to this type of sub-governments, or narrow policy communities, also do present at sub-national levels (state and local levels).

Group Theory

Group theory starts with the assumption that interaction amongst groups is the fundamental truth in political process. When persons with similar interests join in formal or informal ways, they can easily push their claims upon government. The interest groups have a common outlook and they make some claims upon another groups in the society. The grouping is vital because it serves as a link between the person and the administration. Politics is, in fact, the effort amid groupings to manipulate public policy. The job of the political system is to handle group disagreements by instituting laws and regulations of the game. In addition, the political system supports the group to negotiate and cooperate and so that group interests can be

balanced, enacted, and enforced in the form of public policy. The equilibrium assists to make sure that no group controls the policy process (Dye, 2005; Kraft and Furlong, 2010; Stewart, Hedge and Lester, 2008; Anderson, 2006).

Several public policies do reveal the actions of groups. A single individual is important in politics only when he participates in or represents groups. The groups help the individuals to secure their political preferences. A group needs to get access to convey its positions to decision makers to convince and influence decisions of government officials (Anderson, 2006). In the practice, some groups may get better access than other groups. Public policy at any given time may reveal the concerns of the influential groups. As groups become less powerful and less influential, public policy could be changed in supporting the interests of the dominant groups rather than those losing influence. Kraft and Furlong (2010) and Anderson (2006) also argue that group theory is inclined to overstate the role and power of interest groups in policy making and to underrate the role of public officials and the substantial contribution to policy making.

In conclusion, group theory centers in the most important dynamic rudiments in policy making. Particularly it is important in pluralistic and diverse society such as Ethiopia. However, in reality various sections of the society, in particular, those in need and the deprived groups, could not be properly represented in different groups. They may not be totally represented or underrepresented. The people who are not properly represented in groups could not make their voices be heard in the process of policy making and consequently their benefits are expected to be somewhat there.

In general, good policy making and implementation enhances sustainable development for a country. This also creates effective governance and an enabling environment for sustainable development. So, policy makers and implementers need to set institutional mechanisms and processes to harmonize and manage often competing policy objectives and interests.

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research methodology is a systematic way of solving the research problem and a research design is the conceptual structure within which research is conducted. It is a blue print and an outline of what the researcher will do from writing the hypothesis/questions to its operational implication and the final analysis of data (Kothari, 2004). Therefore, this chapter sets out a plan to which the research would be carried out and contains the types of research, types, sources and methods of data collection, sampling technique and sample size and the way in which the collected data were analyzed and interpreted.

Research Approach

The study followed a descriptive and explanatory approaches based on survey method. Mixed research approach (both quantitative and qualitative research approaches) was employed in the study. That is, it focused on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in order to provide a better understanding of the research problem and research questions. Explanatory sequential mixed method was made use of in the study. First quantitative data were collected and analyzed, and then built on the findings to give details with qualitative data.

The prior quantitative findings were clarified further with the qualitative information that followed in the next step. The cross-sectional study was found to be more appropriate for this study since it involved sampling various segments of

population at a point in time. In this study, both primary and secondary data sources were used. Primary data were collected using questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs). The secondary data were collected from constitutions, magazines, unpublished documents and previous studies related to public policy making.

Sampling Techniques and Sample Size

In this study, nine sectors at the Oromia regional state administration-level were selected using purposive sampling technique based on their relevance for the study. The sectors include 'caffee'/council of Oromia regional state, office of the president of Oromia regional state, Oromia supreme court, Oromia public service and human resource development bureau, Oromia justice bureau, Oromia plan and economic development commission, Oromia education bureau, Oromia water, energy and minerals bureau and Oromia agriculture bureau. Then, employees and managers from each sector were taken by using simple random sampling technique for their representativeness.

To determine the sample size (n) of the respondents who respond to the questionnaire, the following Kothari (2004) formula was applied.

$$n = \frac{z^2 \cdot p \cdot q \cdot N}{e^2 (N-1) + Z^2 \cdot p \cdot q}$$

Where, p = stands for sample proportion, $q = 1 - p$; z = stands for the value of the standard variance at a given confidence level. In this case at 95% confidence interval, 1.96 was taken as the value of z ; e = stands for acceptable error (the precision) in which 8% (0.08) was taken (Kothari, 2004). N = stands for total number of bureau-level civil servants and public sector managers in the regional state which were 32724 (Oromia Public Service and Human Resource Development Bureau, 2018) and n = stands for size of sample. By taking the value of $p = 0.5$ using the most conservative sample size, in which case ' n ' was the maximum and the sample yields the desired precision (ibid). By substituting these values in the above formula, it gives:

$$n = \frac{(1.96)^2 * 0.5 * 0.5 * 32724}{(0.08)^2 (32724-1) + (1.96)^2 * 0.5 * 0.5} = 151$$

For convenience, and to fulfill the requirements of efficiency and representativeness, the researcher decided to make the sample size 200. This is because, increasing the size of the sample beyond 151 helps to minimize the sampling error as there could be some variation among the sectors of the regional state. However, if the sample is increased beyond 200, it will be costly and difficult for management. In addition, five senior experts and managers from the selected sectors were interviewed, and two focus group discussions (FGDs) were also conducted. Out of the distributed 200 questionnaires, 185 of them were filled and returned. Hence, the response rate is 92.5%.

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection involved methodological triangulation and data triangulation or a combination of methods and data sources. According to Yeraswork (2000), the use of several qualitative and quantitative methods and different data sources such as focus groups, survey, interviews, personal observation, etc are helpful to find adequate information to get individual, group and institutional views. Therefore, in this study in-depth interviews, focus group discussion and survey questionnaires were used in order to get sufficient information about public policy making in the regional state.

The analysis of the study was descriptive that combined both qualitative and quantitative data. The quantitative data were also analyzed by using descriptive statistics. Statistical package for social scientists (SPSS) was also used to generate percentages, tables and graphs to critically assess and explore the process of public policy making in the regional state. Besides, to check whether there was a significant association between variables in the distribution of perceptions among or between groups of respondents in terms of given items, the Pearson Chi-square test was used. The data that were collected from interviews, FGD and open ended questionnaires were coded and transcribed into texts and were analyzed by content analysis or exploratory means. Besides, respondents' assertions were validated with relevant documentary evidences. Subsequently, results obtained both from qualitative and quantitative data were triangulated.

POLICY MAKING ACTORS IN THE REGIONAL STATE

Policy actors are essential factors that need to be considered in the policy process (Howlett and Ramesh, 2003) as they affect the preferences and actions of citizens. They also put policies in place and implement them to solve public problems. With regard to the extent to which different policy actors participate in policy process in Oromia regional state, respondents were asked to express their opinion. When asked about the participation of different parties in the regional state (Table 1 below), policy actors which are perceived as active participants (high and very high) in the policy making process of the regional state are executive organs at federal level (87%), regional level executive (40.5%), and federal parliament (48.9%). About 30.8% of the survey respondents also perceive that the participation of regional executive body in the policy process is medium.

On the other hand, a rather surprisingly substantial share of respondents rated the participation of other actors as low and very low: opposition parties (95.1%), interest groups (80%), citizens (85.9%), media (71.9%), regional judiciary (68.1%), *caffee*/regional council (39.5%), researchers (70.8%), and federal judiciary (56.2%). The participation of regional council is also perceived as medium by 36.8%. It can also be inferred from the data that the executive organ of the federal government dominates the policy making process in the regional state. In most cases, legislative proposals are initiated by sector bureaus (executive branch). Even though the constitution (FDRE, 1995) demarcates the power relationship among the branches of government, the dominance of the executive organ is clearly revealed in the state. Interviewees and FGD discussants also revealed that, in practice, separation of power has not been observed between the organs of government in the regional state. The utmost decision-making authority in the Oromia Regional State is given to the cabinet members (heads of sectoral bureaus, vice president and the president) under the leadership of the president of the regional state (*Magalata Oromia*, 2000).

Table 1: Policy Actors

Participation of	N	Very low	Low	Medium	High	Very high	Mean	Rank
Regional Executives	185	27(14.6%)	26(14.1%)	57(30.8%)	42(22.7%)	33(17.8%)	3.15	3
Opposition Parties	185	148(80%)	28(15.1%)	3(1.6%)	6(3.2%)	0	1.28	11
Interest Groups	185	100(54.1%)	48(25.9%)	29(15.7%)	3(1.6%)	5(2.7%)	1.73	9
Federal Executives	185	4(2.2%)	7(3.8%)	13(7%)	35(18.9%)	126(68.1%)	4.47	1
Citizens	185	92(49.7%)	67(36.2%)	15(8.1%)	11(5.9%)	0	1.70	10
Media	185	64(34.6%)	69(37.3%)	30(16.2%)	16(8.6%)	6(3.2%)	2.08	7
Regional Judiciary	185	48(25.9%)	78(42.2%)	34(18.4%)	19(10.3%)	6(3.2%)	2.23	6
Regional Council	185	27(14.6%)	46(24.9%)	68(36.8%)	26(14.1%)	18(9.7%)	2.79	4
Federal Parliament	185	17(9.2%)	21(11.4%)	56(30.3%)	33(17.8%)	58(31.4%)	3.51	2
Researchers	185	86(46.5%)	45(24.3%)	39(21.1%)	10(5.4%)	5(2.7%)	1.94	8
Federal Judiciary	185	40(21.6%)	64(34.6%)	38(20.5%)	22(11.9%)	21(11.4%)	2.57	5

Source: Own survey of 2018

In addition, 87% of the respondents are of the view that executive organs at the federal level have significant influence on the policy process of the regional state. This also vividly indicates that regional policy actors still consider policy making the prerogatives of the central government due their weak policy capacity to execute their mandate as per the provisions in the constitution and the federal government's influence.

Hence, it can be inferred from the above discussion that even though the policymaking institutions have been restructured as provided under the 1995 constitution into state and federal levels, and both consist of the three branches of government (legislature, the executive and judiciary), the executive at both levels has assumed a predominant role in the process of public policies. The federal government also has high influence and control over the regional states. The participation of opposition parties, interest groups, citizens, media and researchers in policy making process of the regional state is also rated as low and very low by 95.1%, 80%, 85.9%, 71.9% and 70.8% of the respondents respectively. This reveals that many actors do not actively participate in the policy making process in the regional state as there is no political space for those actors since the executive dominates the lawmaking process in the regional state.

PARTY POLITICS AND POLICY MAKING

Brown and Amdissa (2007) state that policy formulation and implementation in Ethiopia is shaped by the ideology and political strategy of the ruling parties. They further argue that the policy making process in Ethiopia is not systematic, and it is not participatory. It is rather top down activity.

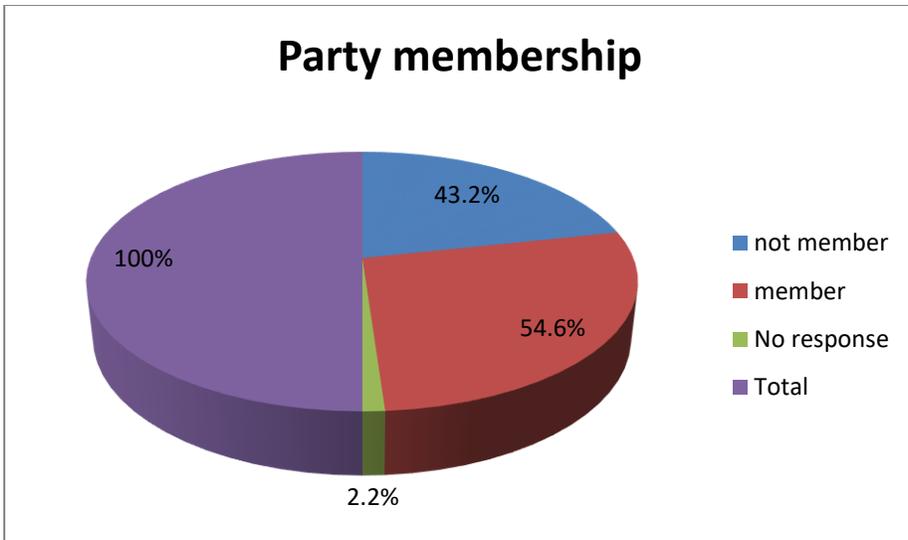


Figure 1: Party Membership of Respondents

Source: own survey of 2018

Figure 1 above summarizes the survey results about party membership of the respondents in the sectors of the regional state. As revealed on the above figure, 54.6% of the survey participants reported that they are members of political party and the rest 43.2% of them said that they are not members of any political party. They were further asked (in the figure 2 below) to explain to which party they belong and majority (50.8%) of them responded that they are members of the ruling party, Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). Only 1.1% of them said that they are members of opposition political parties and 4.9% of them did not reply, they may not want to tell their political affiliation.

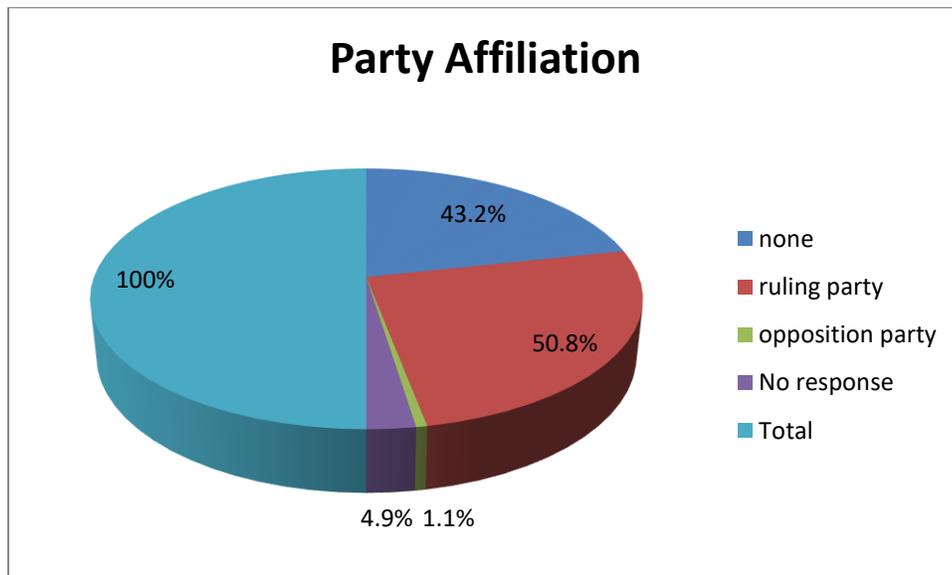


Figure 2: Political Affiliation of the Respondents

Source: own survey of 2018

Due to the absence of political space for the involvement of opposition parties, it is very difficult to have alternative views in the process of policy formulation and execution. In such cases, it is also not difficult for the ruling party (EPRDF) to incorporate its ideology easily in the process of policy making. It is also difficult for majority of the people who can be considered plural society having diverse interest to be represented by a single party.

It is thus self-evident that the ruling party had increasingly established awesome influence to set in motion any agenda and policy decisions through its members in the civil service institutions. This also enables the party (EPRDF) to have a monopoly on policy agenda setting, and vitalize its control over the entire policy making process in the regional state in particular and the country in general.

The regional state is the stronghold of the ruling party affiliate, Oromo Democratic Party (ODP). As there are no other strong competitors, the debate on policy issues strictly follows party lines and influence the entire policy process. It is therefore accurate to say that ruling party has as much predominance in the state's policy and legislative process as in the national process because almost all of the development policies and strategies are designed by the federal government under the influence of a single party (EPRDF). International Crisis Group (ICG) (2009) also states that "power is concentrated and most strategic decisions are taken in the EPRDF executive committee and the prime minister's office" (pp,15).

This indicates that the ruling party (EPRDF) tightly dominates the political representation, decision-making and public space. The party's pledges to bring multi-party system in the country and its being one-party state in reality also seems contradictory. As also indicated in the following table, party membership is highly correlated with position of the respondents.

Table 2: Position of the Respondents and Party Membership

		Party membership			Total
		none	ruling party	opposition party	
position of respondent	low	7	3	0	10
	middle	59	55	0	114
	high	15	36	2	53
Total		81	94	2	177

Source: own survey of 2018

As can be seen from table 2 above, the association between position and party membership is statistically significant (Pearson Chi-Square=14.092^a; P=.007). The relationship is positive which means the higher the position, the larger the members. This shows that the top level of government is controlled by group of elites from the same party which also restricts the participation of other actors.

Questions on ruling party's role in policy formulation and implementation in the regional state were forwarded to the senior civil servants and managers of the sectors and the results are summarized in Table 3 below to capture to what extent dominance of ideology is observed in the state.

Table 3 reveals that the participation of ruling party in the policy making process of the regional state is perceived as high and very high by 95.7% of the respondents. About 80% of them also believe that ideology or rhetoric rather than the interest of the public dominates in the policy process in the state. This clearly demonstrates the dominance of the executive and party leadership in the policy making process of the regional state.

Table 3: Regional Policy Actors and Policy Making

Actors' role	N	Very low	Low	Medium	High	Very high
Participation of ruling party	185	4(2.2%)	0	4(2.2%)	22(11.9%)	155(83.8%)
Dominance of Ideology	185	7(3.8%)	10(5.4%)	20(10.8%)	46(24.9%)	102(55.1%)
Disagreement on policy implementation	185	33(17.8%)	46(24.9%)	64(34.6%)	24(13%)	18(9.7%)
Regional actors' view about policy making as only the right of federal gov't	185	75(40.5%)	21(11.4%)	28(15.1%)	37(20%)	24(13%)
Awareness of constitutional rights	185	35(18.9%)	45(23.5%)	57(30.8%)	24(13%)	24(13.8%)
Agreement on policy objectives	185	17(9.2%)	37(20%)	46(24.9%)	47(25.4%)	38(20.5%)

Source: own survey of 2018

The above table also indicates that 42.7% and 45.9% of the survey respondents opined that there is agreement on policy implementation and policy objectives among all policy actors in the region respectively. Interview respondents and FGD participants also confirmed that there is politicization of civil servants in the region. More than 50% of the respondents of this survey were also ruling party members (Fig. 2 above).

Since majority of the civil servants and managers are members of the ruling party, agreement on the objectives and implementation is easy. This political clout has given the ruling party (EPRDF) all the influence and leverage to maintain uniformity of the policies formulated at the center. The ruling party controls policy agenda and the cabinet enjoys a virtual monopolistic leverage. "A dual dynamic is at work: a more visible, formally decentralized state structure and a more discreet but effective capture of the state by the EPRDF and its affiliated regional parties" (ICG, 2009:15). Thus, this reveals that the elite group of executive plays the dominant role in the regional state in ways that subsume most of the sectoral bureaus.

This also results in lack of competitiveness and greater transactional costs when policies are made to flow from the center. There is little chance of changing a decision or bill once it has been introduced or brought to the parliament. Policymaking in such circumstances is therefore centralized and enables government in power to take decisive actions whenever it wants to. In such circumstance, the executive is always privileged for various reasons to play an upper-hand over the parliament.

Focus group discussants and interviewees also argue that the principles that the party follows such as democratic centralism, party discipline, an extensive patronage system and absence of meaningful opposition party which can propose alternative views are some of the factors that severely hampered genuine democratization in the country and in the region. " policy decisions are monopolized by a single party state", an interviewee during interview session. This shows the supremacy of the party apparatus behind the pretense of regional and local autonomy.

It must be noted that the policy making issue deserves critical consideration in light of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) constitutional provisions and the regional state's constitution. As stated on Table 3 above, 26.8% of the respondents reported that knowledge of the policy actors in the region about the constitutional provisions to initiate and design policy is high and very high while 30.8% of them said that it is medium. The rest 42.4% of the survey participants believe that the knowledge about constitutional provisions is low and very low. It was also raised during interviews and FGDs that there is a problem of understanding the concept of policy and federalism. "Policy is considered as only a general direction, but every government decision is a policy", an FGD participant.

Interviewees said that officials and employees did not properly internalize the rights given in the constitution with regard to policy making right of states. As also raised in FGDs, longstanding centralized mentality of officials at the state and the center, single party dominance and absence of other competitive parties, and considering policy making as the prerogatives of the federal government negatively affected the regional state in exercising its policy making autonomy.

In principle, federalism is practiced to address the diverse needs and preferences of the society. Therefore, raising the understanding level of the policy actors help them to actively participate in policy process. As a result, the regional state can be empowered and could own its policy formulation, execution, evaluation, change, modification or termination of policies that fall within its jurisdictions based on their objectives, needs and problems to be addressed.

POLICY ANALYSIS

Policy analysis utilizes numerous techniques of investigation and cases to create and renovate policy-relevant information that may be used in political situations to address policy issues (Fischer et.al., 2007). Obviously, it is clear that good policy making needs good policy analysis. Respondents were asked how different policy analysis related issues are managed in the regional state and the results are summarized in the following table.

As indicated in Table 4 below respondents pointed out that participation of regional sectors in policies initiated at federal level is low and very low (69.8%), participation (discussion) with stakeholders during execution of policies is low and very low (54.1%), there is no appropriate policy feedback among all organs of government (63.3%), evidence-based policy making is not practiced in the regional state (59.4%), and policy makers do not actively seek solutions to problems in the state (50.8%).

Table 4: Policy Analysis

Item	N	Very low	Low	Medium	High	Very high
Participation of regional sectors	185	73(39.5%)	56(30.3%)	41(22.2%)	10(5.4%)	5(2.7%)
Discussion on policy implementation	185	42(22.7%)	58(31.4%)	59(31.9%)	18(9.7%)	8(4.3%)
Feedback b/n different actors	185	36(19.5%)	81(43.8%)	48(25.9%)	18(9.7%)	2(1.1%)
Evidence based policy making	185	55(29.7%)	55(29.7%)	53(28.6%)	21(11.4%)	1(0.5%)
Solution searching for public problems	185	51(27.6%)	43(23.2%)	49(26.5%)	33(17.8%)	9(4.9%)

Source: Own survey of 2018

Regional states' involvement and influence in centrally originated policies is also minimal (Dereje, 2016). Participants also stated during interview and focus group discussions that there is no culture of policy research in the regional state. Strong policy analysis institutions which provide policy-relevant information are lacking in the regional state.

The federal government cannot continue doing the whole thing for the regional states because they are distant from each other. Therefore, it is imperative to build the policy capacity of regional states in short, medium and long-terms. On the other hand, some public policies can be designed at federal level as they may have a cross-cutting role and impact. It is, however, the case that the federal government alone cannot implement them and the active involvement of regional states still becomes significantly vital.

Think tanks that facilitate decision making and policy implementation are needed in the regional state. If such institutions are strengthened, they can support policy makers to actively seek solutions to public problems and they can support different sectors to properly exchange feedbacks. In addition, such institutions can facilitate consultations and discussions of stakeholders on policy implementation. Fischer et.al., (2007) state that a strong bond between policy research institutions and government agencies or set of officials can create a relationship of trust, and as a result the advice given by such institutions is accepted for policy making.

The notion of policy participation is also one of the most essential aspects of policymaking processes. Consequently, a question was posed to find out which points more describe the policy making process in Oromia regional state. Figure 3 below vividly shows the response as presented here under.

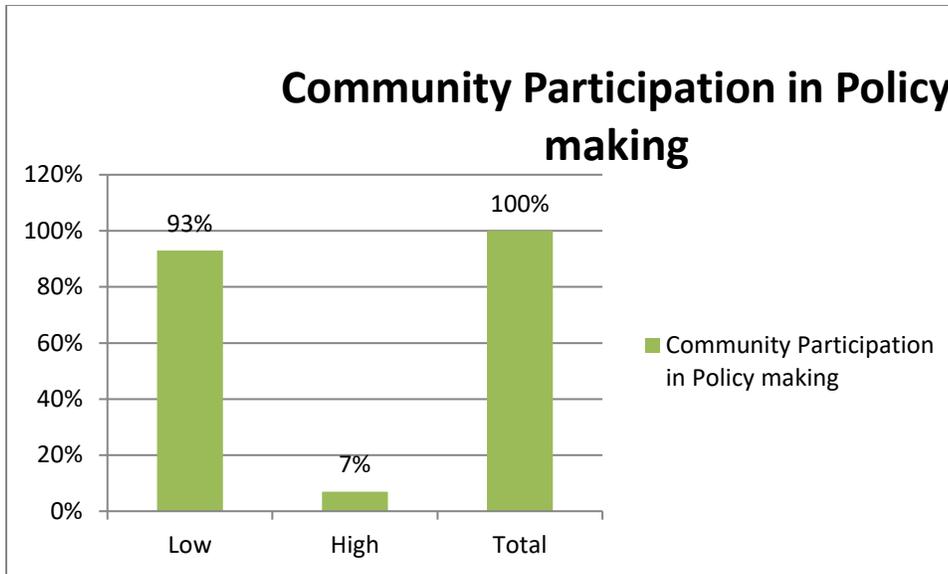


Figure 3: Community Participation in Policy Making

Source: own survey of 2018

According to the information indicated in the figure above, majority (93%) of the respondents witnessed that the current popular participation in the public policy making and implementation of Oromia Regional state is not sufficient. Community participation is constrained, decisions are monopolized by single party government, and there is no adequate space for regional and local actors for deviating from centrally set policy priorities (ICG, 2009).

Interview and FGD results also show that popular participation in public policy making in the country is generally low. It is also perceived as the prerogatives of the federal government. The apparent situation implies that public policy making process in the country is not participatory. In particular, according to discussants, the regional government is not encouraged to design its own context-based policy. Moreover, the responses reveal that even the policies designed at the regional state level are not as participatory as may be thought. It has also been affirmed by the focus group discussants that the participatory role of larger section of the policy community and stakeholders (experts, civic societies and the general public etc.) in the regional state is still low. This may also negatively affect the implementation of the policies.

THE MAJOR CHALLENGES IN THE POLICY MAKING PROCESS IN THE REGIONAL STATE

The survey respondents, key informants and focus group discussions confirmed that the main impediments and challenges affecting policy making and implementation in the regional state are numerous and intricate. Very old and centralized way of thinking of policy actors at the state and the center, single party dominance and absence of other competitive parties, low level of understanding about the constitutional rights, low level of knowledge about public policy process and federalism were identified as the main challenges and impediments facing the regional state.

Key informants and FGD participants also raised that there is no culture of policy research in the regional state due to lack of policy analysis institutions. Interviewees and focus group discussants also reported that there is high corruption practice and serious problem of accountability and transparency. Weak monitoring and evaluation system, poor management of information, weak implementation capacity of civil servants and leaders are critical problems in the implementation of public policies in the regional state.

Popular participation in public policy making in the country is generally low. Public participation in the public policy making and implementation in the state is inadequate as decisions are monopolized by single party government, and there is no adequate space for regional and local actors for deviating from federally set policy priorities. These problems also imply weak organizational and institutional capacity of the regional government. These data are also confirmed by the interviews and focus group discussions.

In general, the aforementioned chapter has investigated the findings of the survey data collected through administration of self-administered questionnaire completed by randomly selected respondents with complementation of data gathered through interview and FGDs. The study examined the problem in line with the policy making process and components such as policy actors, policy initiation and design, party ideology and membership, policy implementation, policy analysis and popular participation. The next section deals with the summary of the major findings and conclusion by putting the research topic and research questions into the spotlight.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The main objective of the study was to assess about public policy actors and institutions at sub-national level in Ethiopia by focusing on Oromia Regional state. In the study emphasis was given to policy actors that influence the policy making process, party ideology and policy making, popular participation, policy analysis and policy implementation in the regional state.

It can be inferred from the data that the executive organ of the federal government dominates the policy making process in the regional state. In most cases, legislative proposals are initiated by sector bureaus (executive branch). Even though the constitution (FDRE, 1995) demarcates the power relationship among the branches of government, the dominance of the executive organ is clearly revealed in the state. In practice, separation of power has not been observed between the organs of government in the regional state. The utmost decision-making authority in the Oromia Regional State is given to the cabinet members (heads of sectoral bureaus, vice president and the president) under the leadership of the president of the regional state.

Even though the policymaking institutions have been restructured as provided under the 1995 constitution into state and federal levels, and both consist of the three branches of government (legislature, the executive and judiciary), the executive at both levels has assumed a predominant role in the process of public policies. The federal government also has high influence and control over the regional states. This reveals that many actors do not actively participate in the policy making process in

the regional state as there is no political space for those actors since the executive dominates the lawmaking process in the regional state.

Due to the absence of political space for the involvement of opposition parties, it is very difficult to have alternative views in the process of policy formulation and execution. In such cases, it is also not difficult for the ruling party (EPRDF) to incorporate its ideology easily in the process of policy making. It is also difficult for majority of the people who can be considered plural society having diverse interest to be represented by a single party. It is thus self-evident that the ruling party had increasingly established awesome influence to set in motion any agenda and policy decisions through its members in the civil service institutions. This also enables the party (EPRDF) to have a monopoly on policy agenda setting, and vitalize its control over the entire policy making process in the regional state in particular and the country in general.

The regional state is the stronghold of the ruling party affiliate, Oromo Democratic Party (ODP). As there are no other strong competitors, the debate on policy issues strictly follows party lines and influence the entire policy process. It is therefore accurate to say that ruling party has as much predominance in the state's policy and legislative process as in the national process because almost all of the development policies and strategies are designed by the federal government under the influence of a single party (EPRDF) because also power is concentrated and most strategic decisions are taken in the ruling party's executive committee and the prime minister's office.

This indicates that the ruling party tightly dominates the political representation, decision-making and public space. The party's pledges to bring multi-party system in the country and its being one-party state in reality also seems contradictory. As Pearson Chi-Square test result indicates, party membership is highly correlated with position of the respondents. The association between position and party membership is statistically significant (Pearson Chi-Square=14.092^a; P=.007). It shows the higher the position, the larger the members. This shows that the top level of government is controlled by group of elites from the same party which also restricts the participation of other actors.

This clearly demonstrates the dominance of the executive and party leadership in the policy making process of the regional state. Since majority of the civil servants and managers are members of the ruling party, agreement on the objectives and implementation is easy. This political clout has given the ruling party (EPRDF) all the influence and leverage to maintain uniformity of the policies formulated at the center. The ruling party controls policy agenda and the cabinet enjoys a virtual monopolistic leverage. Thus, the elite group of executive plays the dominant role in the regional state in ways that subsume most of the sectoral bureaus.

This also results in lack of competitiveness and greater transactional costs when policies are made to flow from the center. There is little chance of changing a decision or bill once it has been introduced or brought to the parliament. Policymaking in such circumstances is therefore centralized and enables government in power to take decisive actions whenever it wants to. In such circumstance, the executive is always privileged for various reasons to play an upper-hand over the parliament.

It was also found by the study that knowledge of officials and employees on the constitutional rights of policy making of the state is low. Longstanding centralized mentality of officials at the state and the center, single party dominance and absence of

other competitive parties, and considering policy making as the prerogatives of the federal government, all negatively affected the participation of regional actors and institutions. In principle, federalism is practiced to address the diverse needs and preferences of the society. Therefore, raising the understanding level of the policy actors help them to actively participate in policy process. As a result, the regional state can be empowered and could own its policy formulation, execution, evaluation, change, modification or termination of policies that fall within its jurisdictions based on their objectives, needs and problems to be addressed.

Regional states' involvement and influence in centrally originated policies is also minimal. In addition, there is no culture of policy research in the regional state. Strong policy analysis institutions which provide policy-relevant information are lacking in the regional state. The federal government cannot continue doing the whole thing for the regional states because they are distant from each other. Therefore, it is imperative to build the policy capacity of regional states in short, medium and long-terms. On the other hand, some public policies can be designed at federal level as they may have a cross-cutting role and impact. It is, however, the case that the federal government alone cannot implement them and the active involvement of regional states still becomes significantly vital.

Think tanks that facilitate decision making and policy implementation are needed in the regional state. If such institutions are strengthened, they can support policy makers to actively seek solutions to public problems and they can support different sectors to properly exchange feedbacks. In addition, such institutions can facilitate consultations and discussions of stakeholders on policy implementation. The notion of policy participation is also one of the most essential aspects of policymaking processes. A strong bond between policy research institutions, universities and government agencies or set of officials is also vital as it can create a relationship of trust. This also helps to provide policy-relevant information and advice that helps to make evidence-based advice policy making.

Popular participation in public policy making in the country is generally low. It is also perceived as the prerogatives of the federal government. The apparent situation implies that public policy making process in the country is not participatory. In particular, the regional government is not encouraged to design its own context-based policy. Moreover, the responses reveal that even the policies designed at the regional state level are not as participatory as may be thought. The participatory role of larger section of the policy community and stakeholders (experts, civic societies and the general public etc.) in the regional state is still low. This may also negatively affect the implementation of the policies. Community participation is constrained, decisions are monopolized by single party government, and there is no adequate space for regional and local actors for deviating from centrally set policy priorities. These problems also imply weak organizational and institutional capacity of the regional government.

The public institutions also lack flexibility and there is also problem of accountability, transparency and corruption that adversely affects policy implementation in the region in particular and in the country in general. Weak monitoring and evaluation system, poor management of information, weak implementation capacity of civil servants and leaders are critical problems in the implementation of public policies in the regional state. Hence, there is a need to build strong institutions and implementing capacity of the bureaucracy and political leaders.

Therefore, regional states need to articulate clear and comprehensive policies for sustainable development. Regional policies also need to incorporate the sustainability dimensions of development. Regional policy actors should focus on policies that balance environmental and economic aspects that incorporate multitude of objectives into a more coherent and sustainable idea of human wellbeing. Policy coherence is also important because it requires bringing sustainability considerations more systematically into policy making. Policy coherence for sustainable development puts greater emphasis on the effects of policies on the well-being of local people. Policies also have a key role to play for delivering the economic, social, and environmental transformations needed for achieving more sustainable development.

REFERENCES

- Alston, Lee J., Melo, M. A., Mueller, B. and Pereira, C. (2004). Political Institutions, Policymaking Processes and Policy Outcomes in Brazil, IDB Working Papers.
- Anderson, James E. (1990). *Public Policymaking: An Introduction*, 6th ed. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston
- Anderson, James E. (2006). *Public Policymaking: An Introduction*, 6th ed. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston
- Andrews, Clinton J. (2007). Rationality in Policy Decision Making in Fischer, Frank and Gerald J. Miller (eds.), *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis: Theory, Politics, and Methods*, pp. 161-171, USA, Taylor & Francis Group, LLC
- Atelhe, George Atelhe and Akande, Benyin Adah (2006). The challenges of implementing public policies in Nigeria: Strategies for Effective Development in Educational Sector. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science (IOSR-JHSS)*,
- Brown, Taylor and Amdissa Teshome, (2007). *Implementing Policies for Chronic Poverty in Ethiopia*, Chronic Poverty Research Center and ODI
- Chakrabarty, Manas, Manas Chakraborty and Vidyawati Agarwala (2003). Public Policy Making in India: A Study of Sikkim, *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 64, No. 3/4
- Cochran, C. and Malone, E. (2005). *Public Policy: Perspectives and Choices*, 3rd ed. Lynne Rienner publishers
- Dereje Terefe (2016). Policy Mandates and Practices in a Federal System: The Case of Oromia National Regional State (Ethiopia), *Journal of public policy and administration research*, vol.6, No. 11.
- Dye, Thomas R. (2005). *Understanding Public Policy*, Pearson Prentice, Hall, New Jersey
- Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia (FDRE) Constitution (1995). Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
- Fischer, Frank, Gerald J. Miller and Mara S. Sidney, (2007). *Handbook of Public Policy Analysis: Theory, Politics, and Method*, USA, Taylor & Francis Group, LLC
- Howlett, Michael and M. Ramesh (2003). *Studying Public Policy: policy cycles and policy subsystems*, Oxford University Press, Canada,
- Howlett, Michael, (2007). Analyzing Multi-Actor, Multi-Round Public Policy Decision-Making Processes in Government: Findings from Five Canadian Cases, *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique*, Vol.40, No. 3, pp. 659-684
- International Crisis Group (ICG) (2009). Ethiopia: Ethnic Federalism and its discontents, Africa Report No. 153-4
- Kay, Adrian (2006). *The dynamics of public policy: theory and evidence*, Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, UK.
- Kothari, C.R. (2004). *Research Methodology: methods and techniques*. (second ed.). New international (p)limited.
- Kraft, Michael E. and Furlong, Scott R.(2010). *Public Policy: politics, analysis, and alternatives*, 3rd ed. CQ press, Washington, DC
- Larbi, G. (1999). The New Public Management Approach and the Crisis States. Retrieved April 2018 from <http://www.unrisd.org>.

- Maddison, Sarah and Richard Dennis (2009). *An introduction to Australian Public Policy: Theory and Practice*, Cambridge University press.
- Magalata Oromia (2001). Oromia National Regional State Proclamation for the Reorganization and Redefinition of powers and duties of the executive organs of the Oromia Regional State.
- May, Peter J., Koski, Chris and Stramp, Nicholas (2014). Issue expertise in policymaking, *Journal of Public Policy*, page 1 of 24 Cambridge University Press,
- McLain, Rebecca J. (1995). Who Decides? Policy Processes. Federalism, and Ecosystem Management: (A Concept Paper for the Eastside Assessment Team)
- Mulugeta Abebe (2005). A Critical Assessment of Institutions, Roles and Leverage in Public Policymaking: Ethiopia, 1974-2004, the University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch, South Africa, PhD dissertation.
- Oromia National Regional State Revised Constitution. (2001). No.46; Oct, 2001. Finfinne/Addis Ababa: ONRS.
- Oromia Civil Service and Good Governance Bureau (2018). Human Resource Status of Oromia Regional State's report (2006 – 2007 E.C.), Finfinnee
- Popoola. Olufemi O. (2007). Actors in Decision Making and Policy Process, *Global Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences*, Global Institute for Research and Education
- Stewart, Joseph, Hedge, David and Lester, James P. 2008). *Public policy: An Evolutionary Approach* (3rd edn.), USA: Wadsworth
- Yeraswork Admassie (2000). *Twenty years to Nowhere; property rights, land management and conservation in Ethiopia*; Asmara: The red sea press. Inc.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nigussie Daba Heyi is an Assistant Professor at School of Policy Studies, College of Leadership and Governance, Ethiopian Civil Service University.