

# Staffing: Practices and Challenges

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**Abstract-** The study investigated three public higher education institutions' academic staffing practices in which guidelines (institutional /national level) these institutions have, the criteria they use, the organ responsible and the challenges the institutions face in the process were dimensions of the study. To this end, embedded multiple case studies design was used and data were collected through semi-structured interview conducted to department heads. Besides, two national documents by the Ministry of Education and four universities in unison endorsed by the ministry respectively assessed and analyzed as supplement. Finally, thematic analysis was made. The findings implications show that while there are national documents meant for guiding the process of staffing by all institutions, they are not self-sufficient to show the procedures and the criteria used to recruit the right candidates except former national document indicates the responsible organ that doesn't seem to have been recognized and functioning by the institutions. As the result, the institutions do recruit using arbitrary procedures and criteria of their own that interest those involve in the process. Therefore, the situation calls for having proper binding guidelines, at national level, that clearly guide the process in such a way that procedures, job descriptions, criteria and tools of evaluation are clearly included in .

**Index Terms-** Practices of staffing at higher education institutions, criteria higher education institutions employ in staffing, challenges of higher education institutions in staffing, and the essence staffing guidelines at higher education institutions.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions prime tasks are teaching, undertaking research and provision of community services. To this end, having academic staffs with the necessary expertise are inescapable. This requires a rigorous recruitment processes that is characterized by institutional/national policy in place. When there is a clear policy, the process could be much easier and more likely that better academics join the institutions. According to [www.wikipedia](http://www.wikipedia) (accessed at 28Nov.2015,at 02:04), staffing is the process of hiring, positioning and overseeing employees in an organization. According to Smriti Chand(2002), it is related to the recruitment, selection, development, training and compensation of the managerial personnel.

Teachers represent the most important personnel of the institutions and their role is matchless. The success or failure of the institutions is highly dependent on the quality, skill and effectiveness of these teachers ( Milos Milutinovic and Raihan Mahmood Kadery,2013). The ways teachers carryout their tasks

determine the success or failure of the institutions. That is why organizations, in general, educational institutions in particular, encouraged to pay attention to selecting the right people and utilizing their capacities ( Milos Milutinovic and Raihan Mahmood Kadery,2013:1).

Likewise, recruiting has become a significant issue because of the contemporary changes: globalization,massification, mobility in higher education,( Wilen-Daugenti and McKee, 2008). Globalization of higher education, in particular, is forcing the universities to increase technical and information literacy, make collaboration with other universities and create good branding (Wilen-Daugenti and McKee, 2008).

Toward this end, staffing guidelines are imperative to have. According to ( Middlewood and Lumby,1999),effective human resource policy is the key to the high quality educational experiences as it can improve quality, commitment, and performance of academic and non-academic staff within the universities. They also argue that educational institutions need effective human resource policy because it provides a proactive and strategic background that can manage the rapid and complex change within education, (Middlewood and Lumby, 1999).

According to the University of Sydney (2014:1&2), it is committed to recruitment and selection practices that are open, competitive and based on merit. Recruitment and selection practices will reflect the University's strategic and operational objectives and its commitment to equity and diversity in employment practices.

The objectives of an educational system are realized through its teachers. These teachers teach, undertake research and give community services. These tasks are huge that they require not only knowledge and skills, they need intelligence, too. Teachers need to be knowledgeable in the subjects they teach, relate what they teach in the classroom with learners' real life situations so the students know the economic, social, cultural and political environments of the society they come from.

Teachers need to be intelligent, too. In their relation with their students and workmates, they have to show social and emotional abilities as students depend upon their guidance and teaching. Students' acquisition of knowledge, development of skills and attitudinal changes are greatly affected by their teachers. It is emotionally intelligent teachers that activate educational processes well and inculcate that quality in students,( Sreekala Edannur, 2010).Then, the great asset of the education system will be its teachers.

These days, the work environments are so complex that require different skills. The environment of teaching is no different. Teachers need to be equipped with skills to help them tackle these new and more complex problems. Nonetheless, all academics with degrees do not possess these attributes equally. That makes the staffing processes of higher education institutions

more important. According to the University of Oxford, et al (2016:1), higher education institutes and research entities are constantly competing for talent with other institutions in the world offering excellent conditions for researchers and lecturers. Those with the required potential need to be absorbed into the higher education institutions. To this end, the universities need to have staffing policy which is clear, well versed, fair, merit-based that provides equal employment opportunity regardless of one's race, age, ethnicity, impairment, sex, etc. Academics that undergo these processes and get hired may be the better ones who help achieve the needs of the strategic direction of the universities. So, the researchers were earnestly keen to see what public higher education institutions staffing practices look like: the guidelines they have, the criteria they use and the challenges they face.

**General objective:** Investigate the staffing practices of public higher education institutions.

**Specific objectives:**

- Assess guidelines institutions use in relation to academic staff recruitment.
- Study the criteria used by institutions to recruit academic staff.
- Look into the consistency of staff recruitment practices among universities.
- Identify the different challenges the institutions are facing in relation to staffing.

**Research questions:**

To achieve the set objectives, the following questions tried to be answered through the research.

- Are there staffing guidelines used by the universities?
- What are the specific criteria used to hire academic staff?
- Are the staffing criteria/ procedures used by universities consistent throughout?
- What are the challenges in the process?

**Significance of the Study**

The study focuses on investigating the academic staff recruitment processes of public higher education institutions. As a result, the research outcome may be important in the following ways:

- May create awareness among those who are concerned about the importance of clear guidelines to recruit staff.
- May showcase the deficiencies of higher education institutions legislation (2008) and the harmonized academic policy of Ethiopian public higher education institutions (2013) documents in place.
- May initiate the institutions to reconsider their criteria of staff recruitment.

**Scope of the Study**

The study investigated the practice of staffing of three public higher education institutions in 2014/15. While the institutions are Jimma University, Debre Markos University and Debre Tabor University, the dimensions of the research were guidelines the

institutions have, the criteria these institutions use and the challenges they face to recruit academic staff .

**Limitation of the study:** The limitation of the study was that the number of female participants, compared to males, was small as female academic staff in these institutions is very small.

**Definition of important terms:**

- Staffing: is the process that universities go through in order to recruit academic staff.

**II. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD**

The research design used is embedded multiple case studies.

**Case study**

Is empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real life context, (especially when) the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident (Yin 2009: 18). Case study, by its very nature, copes with the technically distinctive situation where there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result, relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulation fashion, and as another result, benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide (ibid).

**Single case study and embedded multiple case studies**

Single case study studies a case in its totality, studies units or processes or projects within a single case (embedded) while multiple case studies study and compare cases in their totality (holistic), studying various units within identifiable cases (embedded data collection and analysis), (Yin 2009: 21).

The research method used is qualitative.

**Study participants:**

**Universities:** The universities under study are of three generations: first, second and third. From these categories of universities, one from each was taken randomly using lot. So, the universities included in the study were three: Jimma (first generation), Debre Markos (second generation), and Debre Tabor (third generation).

**Colleges, schools /institutions**

To identify colleges involved in the study, first, the number of the colleges, schools or institutions of the sample universities was identified. Then, of the identified colleges, schools or institutions of the universities, one-third of them were taken from each university.

**Departments:** Again, to determine the departments of the sample colleges involved in the study, the number of the departments in the colleges was also identified beforehand. So that one-third of the departments were included.

**Department heads:** Of all the departments in sample colleges, one-third department heads from each college taken randomly. And the randomly selected departments' heads are interviewees by default. So, the number of the participants/interviewees that involved in the study are thirty six.

### **Sampling techniques**

The sampling techniques employed are stratified, random, purposive and availability sampling. First, the universities are put in their generation/stratum and one from each generation taken randomly. Then, the number of colleges, schools, institutes, etc. of sample universities made known. Once this was done, the number of departments of these colleges was also made known. To maintain the proportionality between numbers of departments and heads involved in the study against the number of academic staff in the respective university, colleges with highest number of departments chosen purposively. Then, one-third of the departments selected randomly and the selected departments' heads were made interviewees.

### **Instruments of data collection:**

#### **Semi-structured interview:**

The interview, which was conducted to department heads, was specifically on guidelines universities have, the criteria these universities use to recruit academic staff and the challenges faced in the staffing process.

### **Document analysis**

The Higher Education Institutions' Legislation (2008) by the Ministry of Education and the Harmonized Academic Policy of Ethiopian Public Higher Education Institutions (2013), a document developed by four universities in unison and endorsed by the ministry of education were assessed and analyzed.

### **Method of data presentation and analysis**

The data collected from the respondents were conscientiously read and classified. Comparison and contrast among the institutions on the dimensions of the research: the guidelines they have, the criteria they use and the challenges they faced and (the personnel involve in the staffing process implicitly) made. Besides, the Higher Education Institutions' Legislation of 2008 by the Ministry of Education and the Harmonized Academic Policy of Public Higher Education Institutions of 2013 were assessed and analyzed as supplement. Finally, thematic analysis was made.

### **Ethical consideration**

Before commencing the research study, the researchers had a recommendation letter from the University (where researcher work) and communicated its objectives to the target universities. Afterwards, we went to respective sample colleges, schools and institutions and met respondents. Then, explaining the objective of the study once again, we convinced the respondents to participate in the study. With the promise of the confidentiality of the information we managed to collect, the researchers managed to collect the required data.

## **III. FINDINGS**

### **Presentation and Discussion**

As the objective of the study was to investigate the staffing practices and challenges of three public higher education institutions, and the design used is embedded multiple case studies, comparison and contrast of the institutions in different respects were made. The availability of guidelines, criteria used and personnel involve are points of comparison and contrast.

Note: Case study 1 represents Jimma University, while case study 2 and case e represent Debre Markos University and Debre Tabor University respectively.

### **Availability of guidelines for staffing**

#### **Case 1**

When respondents asked if there are guidelines to staffing at their respective institutions, the responses were the following:

R1 replied, "I can't comment."

R2, R9 and R12 replied, "I am not sure."

R3, R4, R5, R7, R10, R11, R13 and R14 replied, "No, there are no guidelines."

R6 and R8 replied, "It's GPA."

The responses are: I can't comment, I am not sure, no there are no guidelines and GPA. From the responses, one can understand there are no clear guidelines at institution or national level to use. If there are guidelines to follow, there is no reason for the respondents to respond the way they did. Besides, when the two national documents, the higher education institutions legislation of 2008 and the harmonized academic policy of higher education institutions of 2013, are assessed there is little the documents offer the institution in this regard. The only area touched upon in the former document is the personnel involve in the recruiting process.

#### **Case 2**

R15, R16, R17, R18, R19, R20, R21, R22, R23, R24, R25 and R26 replied, "Yes, there are guidelines for staffing."

The responses are, surprisingly, the same, which is different from case 1 responses where there were respondents who are neither sure there are nor interested to comment on the use. In this case all claim that there are guidelines to follow. However, as indicated earlier, the national legislation and academic policy documents have nothing to offer in this regard. This is meant the university has the mandate to develop its own. As a matter of fact, it doesn't have mandate to develop its own. The two national documents noted earlier are indicative of this. What the institution can do is modifying the national documents to its contexts. Therefore, the responses of the participants could be attributed to institutional culture. The university is one of the young universities. The staffs, most, are young with limited experience. At universities of this stature the academic freedom might be limited. With less academic freedom, it is unlikely that the academic staff speak their minds.

#### **Case 3**

R27, R29, R30, R32, R33, R34, R35 and R36 replied, "Yes, there are guidelines."

R28 & R31 replied, "No, there are no guidelines."

The responses are 'yes there are guidelines' and 'no there are no guidelines'. The difference from case 2 is that, here, there are participants who claim there are no guidelines. The closeness of responses of this university and that of case two university might be ascribed to the resemblance between them. Though case 2 university is older, by some years, than this university, they have commonalities: the staff are young and they are not so experienced as case 1. Staffs from these universities, from experience in our context, don't enjoy the academic freedom first generation universities do. So, the staffs might be afraid of the consequences of speaking their mind.

## Discussion

Generally, despite the variability of respondents' responses and differing practices of the institutions in staffing academics, there are documents of legislation and academic policies of higher education institutions developed by the ministry of education and four universities in unison endorsed by the ministry respectively supposed to be used in this respect. However, these documents are not in a level that serves their purpose. For example, the harmonized guideline developed in 2013 at national level for the institutions to use is not a proper guideline. A proper guideline, as in the different literatures reviewed, explicitly shows the processes the institutions go through to recruit, indicate the personnel that involve in the process and clearly put the criteria that applicants need to meet to get chosen and occupy a certain teaching position. However, the harmonized academic policy of Ethiopian public higher education institutions of 2013 did say nothing in this regard. If at all and considered enough, it is the one on graduate assistants that states:

A candidate with the qualification of a Bachelor's Degree in three or four years program and with at least the level of a cumulative grade point average of 2.75. However, minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.5 and above may be considered under special circumstances justified by an academic unit and approved by academic vice-president (p.20)

Other than this, in the document, for higher teaching positions, it simply defines what lecturer, assistant professor, associate professor and professor is (pp.21-26). It doesn't show how each category of academics compared and the best picked. This is indefinite and open to different practices. As the document, for a position there might be hundred applicants who meet the minimum requirement.

On the other hand, when the higher education institutions legislation of the 2008 looked at, it suffers the same problems as the document noted earlier: the directives on academic staff recruitment are vague and indefinite. It simply indicates the need for applicants to attach their experience, credentials and additional certificates of trainings during registration (p.7). As how these applicants of same educational level with different experiences and additional trainings are compared and contrasted, how the additional trainings and experiences valued and those given priority, etc. are not clearly indicated. Besides, it indicates that either interview, written or practical exams could be set by the concerned department and the committee which consists of vice dean, department head, teachers' representative and personnel administration head selects (p.8). However, the minimum requirements expected of the applicants, the criteria

they are judged against, additional trainings and experiences that privilege should have been included in the documents.

From the data analyzed, one thing is certain. If there are guidelines at national level, there is no reason for institutions to use different criteria. Nor do the interviewees give different responses to the same question. As long as there are no complete guidelines, the institutions have no choice, but set their own criteria and undertake the staffing process. However, the institutions have failed in this regard too. Same universities of department heads gave different data on the issue. If there are guidelines at institution level, though minor differences are expected on criteria used between departments, they couldn't be totally different. Nor do respondents intentionally give fake data. Such a scenario might not be in the best interest of job seekers and the institutions either. With no complete guidelines in place, the processes of staffing might not be effective and efficient to achieve institutional objectives. According to the University of Sydney (2014:1), the recruitment and selection practices will reflect the university's strategic and operational objectives and its commitment to equity and diversity in employment. According to University of Queensland (2015:8), selection criteria are critical to the recruitment and selection process as they ensure that short listing, interview assessment and reference checks are made on the same basis for all applicants.

Organizational requirements of prospective staff members have a determining influence on the recruitment program. If the requirements are abnormally high, they may impede the program. Therefore, it is important that effective job analysis, job descriptions and job specifications be used to lay down the requirements for the job incumbent, and for the smooth running of a recruitment program (Gerber, Nel & van Dyk, 1995 in Jocelyn Molly Mokoditso, 2011:29).

From the different literatures reviewed above, higher education institutions need to have clear guidelines to follow thoroughly with little space for necessary amendments by those concerned as the situation warrants. Otherwise, the process might be swayed to individual interests that damage the interests of institutions and the education system in general. Employees, teachers of higher education institutions in this case, are the most important part of their organizations. The success and failure of their institutions highly depends on them. Effective staffing plans, policies and procedures promote the achievement of both an organization and employees' personal goals, for instance, effective staffing can retain the human resource most likely to serve an organization's needs (Carrell, et al 2000 in Jocelyn Molly Mokoditso, 2011:29).

Besides,

Employees represent the most vital part of almost all organizations. Success or failure of organizations highly depends on the quality, skill and effectiveness of its employees. Organizations must, therefore, pay close attention to recruiting the right people and utilizing their capacities. Thus, the recruitment process is crucial for the organization's success. It is more vital for the universities because the major tasks of the universities, i.e. teaching and research, are mostly conducted by the teachers. Universities must have knowledgeable academics to provide quality teaching ....

Milos Milutinovic and Raihan Mahmood Kadery(2013:1)

All the discussions above show to what extent having staffing guidelines at institutions level is important. With guidelines, the practice of staffing might not be abused by discrimination, inequality and unfairness on the basis of competitors' ethnicity, religion, locality, etc which maximizes individuals' chance and right of employment on merit basis, which in turn helps organizations fill vacant teaching positions by best applicants available. This helps to maintain the quality of education institutions offer.

According to Anglia Ruskin University (2012:1), institutions policy must ensure that recruitment and selection decisions are based on the ability of the applicants to meet the requirements of the job description, person specification and any other relevant criteria. All applicants should be treated fairly and on equality basis that show the institutions are committed to valuing diversity and promoting equality. But, without clear guidelines, it is impossible to address. This conviction values the multicultural nature of higher education institutions at present worldwide. In Ethiopia, the situation of higher education institutions is no different. The classrooms are multicultural. So need to be the academic staff which is achievable with clear and practical guidelines. Clear guidelines promote justice, equality and equity which are features of a democratic institution and society at large.

### **Criteria institutions use to staffing**

#### **Case 1:**

R3 replied, "Professional competence."  
R8, R9, R10, R12, R13 and R14 replied, "I can't comment."  
R1, R4 and R11 replied, "I haven't ever participated."  
R2 and R7 replied, "Apart from GPA, anything the department induces is used."  
R5, and R6 replied, "Sociability and professional competence are considered."

Apart from the interviewees who didn't comment on the issue, the criteria used to recruit academic staff, according the participants, are professional competence, GPA, anything a department induces and sociability.

The criteria indicated are not comprehensive that they give the complete picture of the applicants in competition. Besides, are vague and indefinite. How do those involve in the process of selecting measure sociality and professional competence? What are measurements of sociability and professional competence? What are the specific criteria that a department can induce? It is subjective and open to bias. Furthermore, there are respondents who are not interested to talk about the matter: either simply refusing to talk about the issue or mentioned that s/he hasn't participated in such process.

#### **Case 2**

R20 replied, "Interview is used to see different things which are indefinite."  
R16 replied, "Interview and thesis presentation."  
R15 replied "Practical skills like lab. experiment and interview are used."  
R24 replied, "Publication (not compulsory), age, experience, etc."

R25 replied, "Interview conducted to observe applicants' background and academic performance."

R21 replied, "Subject area background and research expertise."

R17, R18, R19, R22, R23 and R26 replied, "Initiation, background and interest."

The criteria used, according to the respondents, are interview, presentation (thesis or subject matter), and practical skills like lab experiment, publication, age, experience, background, academic performance, research expertise, initiation and interest. They seem diverse. They could meaningfully show the candidates' knowledge, skill and attitude. The problem, however, here is that no one can guarantee the proper application of these criteria. One thing, there are no guidelines that show how these criteria are used in comparing and contrasting applicants. With the absence of binding guidelines, there could be subjectivity in evaluating and grading the applicants. Another problem is that the data show that, even within the university, the criteria vary from college/department to college/department. No doubt the criteria used within a university could, to some degree, vary among colleges/departments. But shouldn't entirely different. What we have witnessed from the study is, however, the latter.

#### **Case 3:**

R27 replied, "Research expertise, practical experiences, field experiences, GIS and software skills and attitude."

R30 replied, "Faculty head, department head, and academic vice president selects through interview."

R29 replied "Using interview faculty head selects in consideration of higher education institutions goals, university vision and mission, quality assurance strategies and subject matter mastery."

R36 replied "Through interview anything we want to see."

R31 replied, "Credentials, teaching skills and transfer."

R32, R33, R34, and R35 replied "No comment."

R28 replied, "Putting those with 2.75 and above in order, they are interviewed and made to present their thesis or subject area content followed by question and answer."

So, apart from those unwilling to comment on, the criteria used are research expertise, practical experiences, field experiences, GIS and software skills, attitude, credentials, teaching skills, interview (through which anything is assessed), putting those with 2.75 and above in order and interview and make them to present their thesis or subject area content followed by question and answer. The other means used are: transfer and application ;where a faculty head, department head, and academic vice-president selects through interview; a faculty head selects in consideration of higher education institutions' goals, university vision and mission, quality assurance strategies and subject matter mastery.

Again when we look in to the criteria used here, we believe they are good ones. They are varied, too. But how are they used?

To put the staffing criteria institutions use into perspective, transfer and application come first. For different reasons individuals might ask transfer from one institution to another or apply for a teaching position at universities without advertisement. However, the teachers getting hired this way are

not compared and contrasted with fellow academics. No one can say that they are the best candidates available. Notably, only few succeed this way. Apart from this, in special situations like when the applicants or those request transfer are very rare in the market and the institutions are in demand of them, hiring the individuals is sensible. Otherwise, staffing individuals with their request while their likes are available in hundreds in the market is a disadvantage for all those concerned except the applicants. According to the University of Sydney (2014:10), all candidates, including staff seeking redeployment, will be assessed in relation to clearly defined position-related selection criteria.

Selecting applicants by university officials taking into account the vision and mission of their university is another. Of course, the institutions can set their criteria envisioning their institutions' vision and mission as there are no clear and complete guidelines at national or institutional level so far. From the very beginning, however, the vision and mission of organizations always need to be benchmarks in planning, organizing and staffing processes of organizations. The problem here is that, in the pretext of vision and mission of the institution and using their executive role as shield, these officials may serve their individual interest. Second, except those officials of the universities who set, no one knows the criteria they are using. And what they set at a time might not be used the next time. As a process, it is not transparent and not institutionalized either. It doesn't involve all that should involve in the process. So much so that, the whole process couldn't be credible and trustworthy. According to European Commission for Education, Training, Culture and Youth (2008:10), in most European commission countries, the recruitment process as a whole is based mainly on a joint effort between the institutions and the authorities at central level. Only five countries enjoy particularly noteworthy institutional autonomy in terms of recruitment. In such recruitment scenario, it is probable that the right criteria be set and the right applicants be hired; the whole process could be transparent. This helps the institutions to maintain the principle of integrity and be trustworthy by the community.

Still, another way of recruiting is by a committee of vice-dean, department head, and experienced teachers in the department set the criteria. First and foremost, there has to be an organ responsible for this particular task at institution level with clear guidelines in hand. According to the higher education institutions legislation of 2008, these are not the organs given the mandate to recruit. The one doing the task of recruiting, at some of the institutions under discussion, is not a legitimate organ for the task. In this regard, the higher education institutions legislation of 2008, (p.7) clearly shows the members of the recruiting committee are vice-dean, teachers' representative, personnel administrative head and the head of the department in demand. However, what is happening is that the individuals mentioned above come together, when necessary, set their own criteria and select among applicants. Again the next time when there is need, the individuals come together and do the same. If committee members leave their post or the institutions, the committee members change, and the criteria for staffing might change, too. The whole process doesn't seem to have been institutionalized. Nevertheless, the whole process and staffing guidelines in particular are not ones set up at the time of staffing by an ad hoc committee and dropped the time after. It is an ever

present institutional document that could be developed by delegated organ at national level or institutional level and be revised and contextualized as the situation warrants. This is incompetence on the part of the institutions. Recruitments in such environments lack credibility. According to European commission for education ,training ,culture and youth (2008:10), in most European commission countries, most of the recruitment process is the responsibility of one of the existing institutional level bodies (senate or board of governors). Certain steps in the recruitment process, however, are defined largely either at central or institutional level. Categories of staff and their respective eligibility criteria are defined by official regulations in the vast majority of countries.

When we come to the clear criteria used by the institutions, as respondents, they may be important as they enable to see important attributes of would be teachers. The problems with them ,however, is that they differ from institution to institution with no substantive reason; the individuals involved in the recruitment process differ from institution to institutions; third, the criteria used by the institutions are open to subjectivity and there are no mechanisms to mitigate the influence of the subjectivity either. Most importantly, in some institutions, the criteria used are negatively discriminative and illegal. The fact that there might be times the procedures and criteria institutions use need to differ to some degree, doesn't necessarily mean as institutions of a country they can and should employ necessarily different staffing procedures and criteria. They are all to realize the educational policy of the country. Let alone in a county, countries of European commission are expected to use same criteria and standards and approximately half of the countries organize competitive examinations. Procedures for organizing these competitions are often subject to criteria defined at central level,(Eurydice.2008: 10).

Equally important is those who involve in the process of staffing. In the institutions those who are responsible to staffing differ from institution to institution and within institutions from time to time, too. This changing of personnel makes it difficult for those who are assigned to understand their roles and responsibilities and to be effective and efficient in what they do. Second, there has to be a specific organ tasked to do it. According to University of Regina (2008:1), successful recruitment depends on many factors including timeliness, efficiency and rigorous organization, clarity, and transparency of process. Above all, it depends on all those engaged in the search process understanding how their roles interact with and support the roles of others. It is crucial that search committee members have a detailed knowledge of procedures and regulations at the university and faculty levels. According to the University of Queensland (2015:13), the selection committee for all academic appointments should include the following: dean, head of school, academic board/nominee representative, senior academic staff member, student representative and academic staff from relevant school. Such clarity, apart from bringing efficiency and effectiveness to the whole process, it instills the culture of accountability and transparency in the institutions.

The subjective nature of the criteria used is the other problem. A case in point is interview. When interview is used as criterion, ad hoc committee at college level is set-up, applicants are short-listed and interviewed on any issues interviewers are

interested in turn and then all the committee members give scores. The scores add up and the results posted. To this end, interviewees are usually asked to talk about (in the pretext of knowing the applicants' language proficiency, reasoning and communication skills) is their background: the place where they come from and were educated, etc. So much so that most interviewers get the "most important" information they need: the ethnic background and the locality of the applicants. So, often many members of committees are believed to grade the applicants on the basis of this personal information of the applicants rather than their merit. This violates the rights of employment, the principle of non-discrimination on the basis of sex, race, age, sex, etc which is inconsistent to other institutions practices in the developed world. According to University of Queensland (2015:28), the candidates shortlisted are eligible to compete, there is no need to ask any candidate personal questions. Not only this, members of selection committees must take care not to ask questions or make comments to applicants or others that may discriminate, unless related to a genuine occupational requirement. They claim that it is illegal to discriminate in employment, including recruitment and selection processes, based on: sex, age, race, religion and impairment. According to Milos Milutinovic and Raihan Mahmood Kadery(2013: 4),University of Glasgow believes in equal employment opportunity where all individuals are treated based on their merits and abilities. Throughout the recruitment process, no academic or non-academic staff will be discriminated on any unfair or unlawful grounds i.e. sex, race, disability, marital status, religion and/or belief. By so doing, the university wants to ensure that in all cases the best candidate for the position is appointed.

Besides, in institutions of the developed world there are mechanisms to control subjectivity when they apply criteria which are prone to the problem. According to the University of Sydney (2014:9),the selection committee decides which applicants are recommended and their ranking based on the criteria: the application, referee reports, qualifications, the interview(s), seminar presentations and the opinions of the school members consulted (if applicable);and other assessment information.

However, when these criteria put into practice in the institutions under study, they fall short of credibility. A case in point is presentation. Applicants made to make presentations of their theses or on any contents of their specialty so that committee members evaluate and grade them. In the proceedings, there are no specific criteria which the competitors are judged against. They are simply judged. Given scores add up and determine their fate. These practices are far from being objective, and there is no accountability either. Individuals could value the same thing differently. There could a tendency of favoring one and disfavoring another intentionally or unintentionally unless there are specific criteria against which the individual applicant is judged. So, presentations with no specific criteria to judge against and discriminate among competitors look unreasonable.

Another is credentials and certificates of trainings. Certificates of participations and involvement of a certain nature might help teachers in what they do on daily-basis as they are forums that could develop one's professional practice. But, the required / expected ones from applicants are not specified beforehand. It is

when they are presented that they are labeled worthwhile or unnecessary. In such circumstances, it is difficult to trust the process. People knowingly or unknowingly may overlook those additional credentials which are relevant or vice-versa. Those who deserve the positions may not be selected. This is against the interest of citizens and the institutions in general. On top of that, the quality of education the universities offer is compromised.

The issue, other than the criteria discussed, which deserves some discussion, is respondents' refusal to talk about the criteria the institutions use. Many of them declined to talk about it. If they have trust in the whole process, they wouldn't have any reason not to talk. Refusal to talk, on the part of the respondents, is a sign of disapproval of the whole practice.

Successful recruitment depends on many factors as timeliness, efficiency and rigorous organization, clarity, and transparency of process. Above all, it depends on all those engaged in the search process understanding how their roles interact with and support the roles of others, University of Regina (2008). However, in the institutions under study the staffing process is not getting the necessary attention it deserves. This doesn't help the universities achieve their goals. Recruitment and selection practice will reflect the university's strategic and operational objectives and its commitment to equity and diversity in employment practices, the University of Sydney (2014:1)

In spite of the necessity and indispensability of staffing and its guidelines, the recently developed harmonized academic policy of Ethiopian public higher education institutions of 2013 document has failed to address the issue. This shows how the institutions are incompetent and the little attention they pay to the matter. However, in institutions of the developed world, staffing is one of the most important tasks of the institutions that due emphasis is paid to.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

##### Summary

The study was aimed to investigate the staffing practices of public higher education institutions in general, the guidelines that these institutions have in relation to staffing, the criteria the institutions use and the challenges these institutions face in this respect.

As to the prevalence of guidelines, according to the study, though there are documents like the higher education institutions legislation of 2008 by ministry of education and Harmonized Academic Policy of Ethiopian Public Higher Education Institutions (2013) developed and harmonized at national level for institution to use , they are not complete enough to guide the staffing process properly. They lack to indicate the procedures that the institutions go through to recruitment, fails to include the specific criteria of recruitment, devoid of the job description of each teaching position, with the exception of indicating the responsible organ for staffing (former.)

Another is the criteria the institutions employ to staffing .As there are no proper guidelines to follow, it is imperative for the institutions to set their own criteria and recruit. As a result, the procedures these institutions go through and the criteria they use differ from institutions to institutions. These criteria range from making applicants make presentation of their theses or on any

content from their specialty to interviewing, using informal informants about the discipline and personality of the applicants to comparing them in their grade point average, accepting through transfer, choosing the candidates taking into account the vision and mission of the respective institution by officials of the institutions, physical appearance, credentials, impairment, etc. Not only this, the personnel involving in the recruitment process, too, differs from institution to institutions and within institutions too from time- to –time.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

From the findings of the research, the following conclusions are made.

- ✓ There are no clear and comprehensive guidelines that guide the staffing processes of the institutions.
- ✓ The staffing procedures and/or criteria used are not consistent among the institutions.
- ✓ The challenges the institutions face are:
  - Though in the legislation clearly put who the responsible body are, there are no specific organs responsible of staffing at institution level. In some universities the human resource department, for some the ministry of education, for others institutions' higher officials, still in others ad hoc committees of the dean, the department head, etc. do the business.
  - The criteria used by the institutions vary from institution to institution and change from time to time with in institutions depending on the interest of individuals involving in the process with in universities.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusions made, the following recommendations are forwarded.

- A complete or self-sufficient guideline of staffing needs to be developed either by the ministry of education or the universities in unison.
- The specific organ delegated by the 2008 higher education institution legislation needs to be made the sole responsible organ to the task.

- There have to be binding staff recruitment criteria at national level with little amendments as the situation warrants.

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