

Addis Ababa University
College of Business and Economics
Department of Public Administration and Development Management



**Think Tanks and Policy-Making in Ethiopia: Case Studies on
Ethiopian Economic Association and Forum for
Social Studies**

By
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June 2018
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

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This is to certify that the thesis prepared by Nadia Abdulwahab entitled “*Think Tanks and Policy-Making in Ethiopia: Case Studies on Ethiopian Economic Association and Forum for Social Studies*”, which is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Masters in Public Management and Policy, complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university and that all sources of materials used for the thesis have been duly acknowledged.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACBF	African Capacity Building Foundation
CSP	Charities and Societies Proclamation
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EDRI	Ethiopian Development Research Institute
EEA	Ethiopian Economic Association
EEPRI	Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute
EPRDF	Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FSS	Forum for Social Studies
GTP	Growth and Transformation Plan
HoPR	House of People's Representative
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoFEC	Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation
MoH	Ministry of Health
MoI	Ministry of Industry
MoT	Ministry of Trade
NCD	Non Communicable Disease
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NPC	National Planning Commission
PRC	Policy Research Institute
PRI	Public Research Institute
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Support Program
SMEs	Small and Micro-Enterprises
SNNPR	Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region
TTCSF	Think Tanks and Civil Society Program

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ABSTRACT

The research investigates the roles that think tanks in Ethiopia such as the Ethiopian Economics Association (EEA) and the Forum for Social Studies (FSS) are playing in influencing or contributing to policy-making process in Ethiopia. The general objective of the study is to identify the roles that think tanks play in Ethiopia, the relevance of their research to policy making and the challenges and opportunities they are encountering. The researcher has used qualitative research method and has employed purposive sampling technique. The data was collected using semi-structured questionnaire, in-depth key informant interview and review of documentation. The use of questionnaire was used to complement the interview. The data was analyzed using descriptive analysis method. The timeframe used for the study is since the establishment of the EEA and FSS. The findings of the study indicate that think tanks contribute widely to the policy making process, however, they are not achieving their full potential. There is still room to improve their influence and the relevance of the research topics they select. In terms of challenge, they are operating in a restrictive and disabling regulatory environment imposed by the Charities and Societies Proclamation, limited democratic space and diminishing financial resources. Their trajectory is therefore a downward type as staff morale is also affected. In order for think tanks to surmount the difficulties they are facing, the regulation needs to be adapted to encourage their performance, the democratic space needs to open up and the funding issue resolved through various fund raising mechanisms.

Keywords: Think Tanks, Policy, Policy Influence, Policy Decision Making, Policy-Makers, Policy Problems, Research

Chapter One

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The few civil societies that existed in the feudal monarchy in Ethiopia became extinguished when the Derg regime took control. The majority of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that was allowed to operate during the military Derg regime were those which were international and humanitarian and provided relief against famine. Civil society organizations (CSOs) emerged and significantly grew in 1991 when political space opened up under the new Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF)-led government. The number of registered NGOs reached 310 by 2000 and the number of national NGOs attained 2,275 in 2009 (Strathink editorial team, 2017). When the Charities and Societies Proclamation no. 621/2009 was enacted in February 2009 to regulate the existing civil society, NGOs and policy research institutes, it was regarded as controversial. This regulation comes across as seemingly pragmatic due to the need to regulate the civil society sector in order to ensure transparency and accountability of the civil society organizations. For example, the United States has a regulation on the not-for-profit organizations which prohibits them from working on politics. However, the provisions of the Charities and Societies Proclamation (CSP) or the CSO legislation, as it is commonly known, is considered as restrictive and excessive and therefore the current climate may not necessarily be conducive for civil society to operate at liberty and limits their scope of work such as from human rights, gender equality and conflict resolution due to strict requirements to be adhered (Barder, 2009). Following the enactment of this CSO legislation, the number of national NGOs fell from 2,275 in 2009 to 1701 in 2011 (Strathink Editorial team, 2017).

Ethiopia's economy has registered a strong growth averaging the rate of 10.5% per year from 2005/06 to 2015/16 compared to a regional average of 5.4%, however, it is evident that poverty has still not been eradicated with a per capita income of \$660 (The World Bank, 2017). Although Ethiopia is the fastest growing country in the region and has made considerable progress, it still faces development challenges going ahead and will need

improved policies to tackle these (The World Bank, 2017).

It cannot be denied that think tanks are crucial for a country's development as research can offer the identification of the policy problem and provide a platform for critical thinking and discussion and debate, thereby contributing to the democratization and governance process. Think tanks, through their expertise and research, provide an understanding of technical development issues whether economic or social and help resolve fundamental policy problems in relation to development and poverty reduction by providing solid recommendations. Policy research can play a major role in the policy making process, and will be effective for the sustainable development at the national or local level (Gurung P., 2014).

Amongst the civil society organizations that were created in the early days were the Ethiopian Economic Association and the Forum for Social Studies. The Ethiopian Economics Association was established as a non-profit making, non-political and non-religious association in 1991. The association then established the Ethiopian Economic Policy research Institute (EEPRI) as its research arm in 2000. The Forum for Social Studies was set up in 1998 by a group of academics and civil society activists and is an independent research institute working on social research issues. The EEA and FSS Headquarters are based in Addis Ababa with EEA's several offices operating in different regions. EEA was established with the main objective of contributing to the economic policy formulation capability and broadly to the economic advancement of Ethiopia while that of the Forum for Social Studies is the pursuit independent policy research and the provision of public forum for debates and consultations on policy issues.

This paper assesses the overall contribution of these think tanks to the policy making process in their policy areas and will particularly emphasize the roles they have played in the process, the policy relevance of the topics chosen as well as the challenges that prevented these policy institutes to provide a more meaningful and significant role.

Brief Background of the Selected Think Tanks

In order to get a better understanding of the two think tanks in this study, it is useful to

provide some background information. The EEA and FSS are the two Think Tanks that the researcher assumed to represent think tanks in Ethiopia.

1. Ethiopian Economic Association (EEA)

The Ethiopian Economics Association was established as a non-profit making, non-political and non-religious professional Association in 1991. The Association established the Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute (EEPRI) as its research arm in 2000. It has provided short courses and trainings in the past. It is also planning to establish a training institute that provides graduate level training in Development Economics and short term training on a regular basis. The aim of establishing EEA's training institute is to produce a professional pool of economists that have state-of-the-art knowledge and skills to make a difference in economic research, policy formulation and development practice in Ethiopia. This is expected to ensure sustainable institutional performance and development consistent with the growing demand in the country. Since its establishment, EEA has been actively engaged in economic research, training, organizing of international, national and regional conferences and round table discussions on the Ethiopian economy. It also disseminates the results of these activities through its various publications which include Research Reports, Annual Report on the Ethiopian Economy, Ethiopian Journal of Economics, Quarterly Economic Report, Proceedings of Conferences, working papers etc. The Association has also established Sub-divisions at major towns in the country in collaboration with regional universities to broaden its activities at regional level. This will help to realize EEA's objectives through expanding its outreach services to potential members and stakeholders or clients of the Association. These sub-divisions are located in Hawassa, Bahir Dar, Dire Dawa, Haramaya Eastern Region, and Mekele, Jimma and Jijiga. The vision of EEA is to become the premier Economic Association in Africa renowned for its excellence in membership services and economic policy research. Its mission statement is put as: "to represent the professional interests of our members, advance the discipline of Economics and contribute to the development of the Ethiopian Economy".

The Ethiopian Economic Association (EEA) has the following objectives:

1. to contribute to the economic policy formulation capability and broadly to the economic advancement of Ethiopia;
2. to promote the professional interest of its Economists;
3. to promote the study of economics in the country's educational institutions;
4. to promote economic research and assist in the dissemination of the findings of such research in Ethiopia;
5. to provide fora for the discussion of economic issues and,
6. to promote professional contacts between Ethiopian economists and those of other countries. (<https://www.eaecon.org>, February 2018)

The EEA is formally registered with the Charities and Societies Agency as a Resident Charity and is therefore governed by the rules and regulations that apply for this particular charity type, including the 30-70 directive which stipulates that not more than 30% of the organization's budget should be spent on administrative costs and the remaining 70% should be allocated for program costs. Resident Charities are permitted to obtain funding from external sources such as international donors and as a result advocacy work on human right, governance and democracy are prohibited. Also, profit making such as bidding for consultation is not allowed.

EEA completed its multi-purpose building in 2008. The building has modern lecture theatres, class rooms, a library/resource center, offices for academic and administrative staff, and a conference center suitable for hosting public policy forums. , which will be an important element in the work of the graduate school. It is regarded that the EEA is the right institution to be the venue for a new Ethiopian Graduate School of Development Economics. EEA is a membership based organization which is open to all professionals based on full and associate member as an economist. There are also student members. Currently EEA has more than 4,500 members and its membership is growing at a rapid rate.

2. Forum for Social Studies (FSS)

The Forum for Social Studies is an independent, non-profit institution dedicated to the cause of policy research and democratizing the policy space through informed public debate of development issues and concerns. It was set up in 1998 by a group of academics and civil society activists. The aim was not to provide pure academic research with limited circulation and impact but to promote a tradition of policy-relevant research that is made available to government decision makers, legislators and the general public through public debates and dissemination of the research results. (<https://www.fssethiopia.org>, February 2018). The founders of FSS who were a concerned group of Ethiopian senior researchers came to an agreement that there was political space for citizen participation in the nation and democratic process. They came to realize that the process of nation-building and democratization necessitated the formulation and implementation of pro-poor policies and strategies that are based on evidence-based research and dialogue. FSS is currently registered as a local resident charity organization under the Charities and Societies Law.

The mission FSS has set is to inform and influence policy and practice which lead to the reduction of poverty, and the achievement of sustainable livelihoods in Ethiopia. Its vision is to be a credible and reliable center of excellence and source of policy options that play meaningful contribution towards building a democratically vibrant nation in an inclusive public policy making political system. To achieve its vision, FSS set the ultimate long term objective of carrying out policy oriented research and widen the democratic process through evidence based discussion opportunities and bring development to the nation.

The objectives are broken down into three:

1. Conducting independent research on development issues
2. Broaden the democratic space through participatory policy making
3. Make available research findings to decision makers and other stakeholders through publications, establishing a research center, and media outreach programs

FSS considers public dialogue forums as a flagship product. Institutional independence is one of the four values and principles that FSS has adopted. FSS is a membership-based

organization and currently has 50 members consisting of senior experts, analysts, civil society leaders, academics and researchers with extended experience and diverse specializations such as economists, sociologists, geographers, demographers, and policy analysts. A Board of Directors, an Executive director and full time staff run the organization. The power for decision lies in the General Assembly which meets annually. The role of the Board, which is elected by the General Assembly is to provide guidance and supervision on the activities of the organization whereas that of the Executive Director is to manage the day-to-day activities of the organization assisted by the Management Committee and support staff. FSS have moved to their own building around Minelik II Hospital in Arada Sub City in March 2018 (A Brief History of Forum for Social Studies 1998-2018, March 2018).

This thesis assesses the overall contribution of these think tanks to the policy making process and particularly emphasizes the roles they have played in the process, the policy relevance of the topics chosen as well as the challenges that prevented these policy institutes to provide a more meaningful and significant role.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Since the growth of civil society organizations in the post-Derg era, they have contributed to the betterment of policies and thereby to the development agenda of Ethiopia. According to Jeffrey Clark (2000), civil society had a positive impact between 1991 and 1999 when NGOs were considered an important element in the political and economic transformation of Ethiopia.

However, following the enactment of the Charities and Societies Proclamation, the mistrust between civil society organizations and government increased and the legal framework for these organizations to operate became narrow. The normal outcome of the mistrust and tension between civil society organizations and government is limited effectiveness of think tanks, particularly in influencing policy and meaningfully participating in the policy making process in Ethiopia.

However, there is no sufficient research to measure the impact of national think tanks as opposed to research institutes or civil society in general on Ethiopian policy making process, particularly in the period following the Charities and Societies legislation. The reason the EEA and FSS were chosen was because they are two important Ethiopian think tanks established very early on and working on crucial areas of development such as macroeconomic and pertinent social issues that need to be addressed. Both of these organizations are non-governmental and non-partisan and therefore independent as well as non-profit. They operate in similar policy domains but have different audiences and partners, which implies that both organizations follow different institutional structures and influencing strategies and mechanisms in their endeavors to achieve policy change. The impact that the EEA and FSS have had in the policy making community, whether direct or indirect, and most importantly the analysis of their roles in influencing policy and the factors that have enabled them to contribute positively or those that have prevented them to be less effective and useful in the policy making process are not clearly known.

The aim of the research is to find out whether these think tanks are operating at their optimal level in terms of policy influence and are providing relevant and evidence based research and policy alternatives. The study looks into the factors that have led these think tanks to have similarity or difference in their policy influence positions and to comparatively showcase the factors that enabled or inhibited them to bring policy changes and identify the major constraints to policy influence. This would help to draw lessons for think tanks in our country's context to become effective in their research work.

Through the case study of the two think tanks, this research thesis proposes to fill, to some extent, the knowledge gap of the roles of think tanks in policy influence, particularly the significance of think tanks in the policy making process in Ethiopia. What policy-relevant advances they have made on major development issues in Ethiopia? What are their ways of working to achieve policy influence and constraints encountered in undertaking their ultimate goal of policy influence and change in the current civil society regulatory context?

1.3 Research Questions

The research questions that this thesis seeks to answer are as follows:

1. What are the roles of think tanks in influencing policy making decisions in their specific policy areas?
2. How relevant are the policy problems selected by think tanks?
3. What are the main challenges and opportunities that think tanks are facing in influencing and contributing to policy-making?

1.4 Research Objectives

The general research objective of this thesis is to identify the main roles that think tanks are playing with regards to influencing and contributing to policy making and to compare and contrast their performance as well as the challenges that prevent them from meaningfully contributing to policy making and the opportunities that are presented to them.

The specific objectives that the research intend to achieve is to provide information on the following:

1. To assess the role and influence of the think tanks in their respective areas of policy
2. To assess whether the policy advice provided or disseminated by the think tanks is of relevant nature
3. To determine the constraints and opportunities, if any, of influencing policy decision making

1.5 Scope of the Research

The research was conducted to determine the comparative performance of the Ethiopian Economics Association (EEA) and Forum for Social Studies (FSS) in influencing policy decision making in their respective policy areas since the start of their establishment (1991

for EEA and 1998 for FSS). Although there are other think tanks in Ethiopia, the selection of the EEA and FSS is driven by the similarity of these organizations, i.e. the fact that these institutes are think tanks and therefore bring knowledge to the policy making process; they also share the feature of being independent institutions and working to provide advice on a wide range of policy issues. The similarity of these think tanks will enable the researcher to find out the trajectories of two independent think tanks with similar objectives in the current policy making environment. The selection of two similar think tanks will reinforce the findings of the study and help to infer ideas for think tanks. The study is informed by in-depth key informant interviews of relevant senior staff within the two organizations and where possible other stakeholders and is supplemented by questionnaires. The research will not extend to regional offices of these organizations and will only be based in Addis Ababa. Aspects that will be examined will be the roles, evolution, policy relevance of the institutes and problems faced.

1.6 Significance of the Research

The findings of the study does not only provide an insight on the role that two similar independent think tanks, such as the EEA and FSS, working on similar policy areas, have in the policy decision making process in Ethiopia but also compares and contrasts their performance towards their objectives, identifies the barriers they are facing in achieving meaningful policy role in the policy making process as well as their evolution and trajectories in the policy making process. The organizations under study could also themselves benefit from this research as this puts into perspective their issues with that of other similar organizations and seek remedies for those issues that their counterparts may have successfully addressed. The results of the study could also be the basis for further research by interested academics in terms of deepening and broadening their research on the issues depicted including identifying solutions for the uncovered constraints.

This study is still worth researching as it provides - even though this may be less than perfect – an understanding and overview of the roles of the two think tanks on the policy-making process, their performance which has been put in context in the current regulatory framework as well as their challenges and opportunities.

1.7 Limitations of the Research

Although the proposed focus of this study is to examine and assess the role and influence of the think tanks in policy decision making, a number of literature suggest that it is difficult, even almost impossible to determine the direct impact and influence of public-policy institutes on policy decision making (Ricci, D., 1993; Abelson, D. E.: 1998). However, these think tanks do have some contribution in bringing issues to the attention of relevant policymakers for discussion and debate, also known as agenda setting and therefore add value to the policymaking process. The thesis looks into how their activities are adding up to contribute to the policy decision making process which should be a policy institute's main function.

The major problem faced in this thesis is the methodology for measuring policy influence which is not well developed. As a result, the researcher had to work with an imperfect methodology for assessing the influence of think tanks on the policy-making process.

Also, the research only studies two think tanks which constitutes a challenge for the generalizability of the problems.

Chapter Two

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definition of Terminology and Concepts

It is important to define the following terms and concepts around research and policy influencing in order to have a better understanding of the research thesis.

Terminology

For the purpose of this research, think tanks, research institutes, and policy institutes will be used interchangeably.

Civil Society- According to Julius Court et al, (2006) the terminology 'civil society' is a broad term and includes organizations such as NGOs, community groups, research institutes, think tanks, advocacy groups, trade unions, academic institutions, parts of the media, professional associations, and faith based institutions.

Think Tanks - Merriam Webster defines a think tank as an institution, corporation, group organized to study a particular subject and provide information, idea and advice. Another definition given by the English dictionary is a group of experts brought together, usually by a government, to develop ideas on a particular subject and to make suggestions for action. Wikipedia defines a think tank, policy institute, or research institute as an organization that performs research and advocacy concerning topics such as social policy, political strategy, economics, military, technology and culture. Most think tanks are non-profit organizations, which some countries such as the United States and Canada provide with tax exempt status. Other think tanks are funded by governments, advocacy groups, or corporations, and derive revenue from consulting or research work related to their projects. The University of Virginia's definition of think tanks are research institutes that engage in influencing public policy about the economy, education, the environment, military analysis, technology, international relations and a variety of other fields.

Research Institutes - Public sector research refers to those research and development activities that are either publicly owned or operated or that depend to a large extent on

government block funding for their research activities. There are two categories of such research institutes: universities and public research institutes (PRIs). Universities teach in addition to performing research while PRIs are only involved in providing direct research and development to business firms and public authorities. (The Innovation Policy Platform, 2018)

Policy research institute – Policy research institutes are research institutes that focus on substantive areas of research such as health or education policy. These are similar to think tanks in that they are non-profit. (Wikipedia, June 2018). Policy research institutes are think tanks that focus mostly on policy research and are different from those that focus on other issues such as on political advocacy. (Abelson, 2014)

Consultant institutes – These are professional bodies for consultants and business advisers. (Wikipedia, June 2018). The differentiation between consulting firms and think tanks is that they are for profit while think tanks are non-profit. The scope of work for consultant institutes is related to the individual company they serve whereas that of think tanks could be either the broader public or the individual company commissioning the research. Consulting institutes advance based on selling their business or commissioned research products whereas for think tanks the work comes in based on their reputation. The consulting firm provides the most opportunity for wealth accumulation. (Cohen, 2016)

Policy – Policy is a deliberate systems of principles to guide decisions and achieve rational outcomes. A policy is a statement of intent, and is implemented as a procedure or protocol. Policies are generally adopted by a governance body within an organization. Policies can assist in both subjective and objective decision making. Policies to assist in subjective decision making usually assist senior management with decisions that must be based on the relative merits of a number of factors and as a result are often hard to test objectively. In contrast, policies to assist in objective decision making are usually operational in nature and can be objectively tested. The term may apply to government, private sector organizations and groups, as well as individuals. Policy differs from rules or law. While law can compel prohibit behaviors, policy merely guides actions toward those that are most

likely to achieve a desired outcome.

Policy may also refer to the process of making important organizational decisions, including the identification of different alternatives such as programs or spending priorities, and choosing among them on the basis of the impact they will have. Policies can be understood as political, managerial, financial, and administrative mechanisms arranged to reach explicit goals. (Wikipedia, February 2018)

A policy is not a law but it will often identify new laws needed to achieve its goals. So policy sets out the goals and planned activities of a ministry and department but it may be necessary to pass a law to enable government to put in place the necessary institutional and legal frameworks to achieve their aims. Laws must be guided by current government policy. (www.etu.org.za, February 2018)

Public Policy – Public policy is a system of ‘courses of action, regulatory measures, laws, and funding priorities concerning a given topic promulgated by a governmental entity or its representative (Wikipedia, February 2018). The three main types of public policy are regulatory policy, distributive policy and redistributive policy ([https:// www. angelo. edu> objective](https://www.angelo.edu/objective) 5, February 2018)

Policy Actors – Policy actors are those individuals and groups, both formal and informal, which seek to influence the creation and implementation of these public solutions (Cahn, 2012)

Policy Analysis – Policy analysis is the art and science of determining which public policy, from among alternatives, will most likely achieve a determined set of goals. Policy analysis is the activity of generating knowledge both of and in the policy-making process (Encyclopedia, February 2018).

Policy Making Process – Policy making is a cyclical process. It begins in the agenda setting stage with recognition and definition of a significant public problem and an organized call to government action. In response, the legislative and bureaucratic machinery of government may formulate, adopt and implement a strategy for addressing

the problem. Analysis of policy effectiveness in turn often reveals shortcomings in formulation or implementation or new problems to add to the policy agenda (<https://texaspolitics.utexas.edu>, February 2018). Policymaking process refers to the action taken by government either to solve public problems or improve the quality of life of its citizens. (<https://www.cliffsnotes.com/study-guides/american-government/public-policy/the-policymaking-process>, April 2018)

2.2 Nature and Function of Think Tanks

Abelson and Carberry (1998) affirm that think tanks are diverse in their nature, size, areas of expertise and the quality and quantity of the publication they produce. Due to the diverse nature of think tanks scholars have avoided defining these institutions apart from asserting that these organizations are non-profit and non-partisan involved in the study of public policy.

However, the following are a few definitions by various authors: According to Ofoosu-Appiah (2017), think tanks are policy research, analysis, engagement and advocacy organizations that operate independently from governments and political parties. Also, Ladi (2014) defines a think tank, institute, corporation, or group organized for interdisciplinary research with the objective of providing advice on a diverse range of policy issues and products through the use of specialized knowledge and the activation of networks. Think tanks are different from government, and many are non-profit organizations, but their work may be conducted for governmental as well as commercial clients. According to Ladi, think tanks have several common characteristics. The first one is their policy focus in terms of their objective to bring knowledge and policy making together by informing and, if possible, influencing the policy process. They conduct and recycle research to solve policy problems, not just for theoretical reasons. The second common characteristic is public purpose, which refers to the reason for the existence of think tanks. Most think tanks claim that they conduct research to inform the public and the government on how to improve public policy. They claim that their work is for the common good and to educate the public. The third is the expertise and professionalism of their researchers are the key intellectuals

which enables them to legitimize their findings. Lastly, the key activities of think tanks are analysis and advice through publications, workshops, seminars and conferences.

Think tanks have different institutional forms and functions and provide varying qualities of output and have different levels of impact on the public. Despite their heterogeneity, the place that a think tank occupies institutionally is between a university and government (Gray: 1977/1978).

Xufeng (2009) affirms that policy experts regard policy research and impact on policy formation as their professional missions. In the context of an increased competitive center for ideas, think tanks need to identify their niche, strategies, goals, target audience and period of time they are seeking to make an impact. This will help to explain how and why think tanks attempt to exercise both direct and indirect forms of policy influence (Abelson and Carberry, 1998).

The Forum for Social Studies (<https://www.fssethiopia.org>) states: “its work is guided by the conviction that enhancing the public-decision makers’ interface on key social and economic issues can foster a democratic tradition of public debates as well as promote a transparent, participatory and all-inclusive policy making and implementation space.” Also, even though the Forum for Social Studies acknowledges that the role of achieving development and democratization is mainly that of government it sees its role as helping mediate between the Society and State in achieving those objectives.

Ofosu-Appiah (2017) also agrees that among other things, think tanks play a mediating role between government and the public and that this helps build trust and confidence in public institutions. They facilitate the construction of issue networks by identifying, articulating and evaluating current policy issues and proposals by transforming ideas and emerging problems into policy recommendations. By interpreting issues, events and policies for the print and the electronic media, they facilitate public understanding of domestic and international policy issues. Another critical role they play in a democracy is challenging the standard operating procedures (particularly when they no longer serve the public interest) and business as usual mentality of bureaucrats and elected officials thus making them more

accountable to the people and more efficient as well. The wave of think tanks proliferation across the globe since the 1970s has enhanced democratic governance. In young democracies and transitional economies, think tanks have played vital roles in raising the quality of policy making by bringing new ideas to the attention of policy makers and new perspectives on policy formulation.

There is a debate on going in the think tank community now as to how think tanks ought to be. There are those who believe think tanks should be “academic and objective” and those who feel they must be “policy relevant” and get their research in the hands of policy makers in order to have any value. This is an age old tension between the world of ideas and the world of policy. The academic oriented school believes that think tanks should adhere to academic research standards and focus on the bigger picture and long term issues while the policy relevance school believes that think tanks must engage in ‘action oriented research’ meaning research to solve real life practical problems, research dedicated to coming up with solutions to fiscal and economic problems, social problems, governance and political problems. The policy relevant school believes research by think tanks should be more policy oriented and thus focus more on the needs of policy makers and current policy issues.

2.3 Policy Cycle and process

Policy cycle is a tool used for the analysis of the development of a policy item. It is a rule of thumb rather than the actual reality of how policy is created, but has been influential in how political scientists looked at policy in general.

Anderson (1974) has identified the following policy stages:

1. Agenda setting (problem identification) – This is the recognition of certain subject as a problem demanding further government attention.

Driven by the institutional approach, Abelson (2002) indicates that different policy institutes have different priorities to their participation at different stages of the policy cycle. This will help in comparing how think tanks operate in different political systems. The agenda setting stage of the policy cycle is particularly important and

cannot be overemphasized. The level of influence that think tanks can have on the final choice of policy-makers is limited however, think tanks can influence for a policy to be set on the agenda and create a debate and discussion. This could in turn lead to different alternatives that were not previously on the agenda to be considered.

2. Policy formulation – This stage involves exploring a variation of options or alternative courses of action available for addressing the problem such as appraisal, dialogue, formulation, and consolidation.
3. Decision-making – In this stage, government decides on an ultimate course of action, whether to perpetuate the policy status quo or alter it. The decision could be positive, negative or no-action. (Anderson, 1974). Some authors take decision making as adoption and include it as part of policy formulation.
4. Implementation – This is where the ultimate decision made earlier will be put into practice. (Anderson, 1974). The implementation of policy is often carried out by institutions other than those who adopted or formulated the policy. Successful implementation depends on the complexity of the policy, coordination between those putting the policy into effect, and compliance (<https://www.cliffsnotes.com/study-guides/american-government/public-policy/the-policy-making-process>, April 2018)
5. Evaluation – This is the final stage which assesses the effectiveness of a public policy in terms of its perceived intentions and results. Policy actors attempt to determine whether the course of action is a success or failure by examining its impact and outcomes. Wikipedia, January 2017.

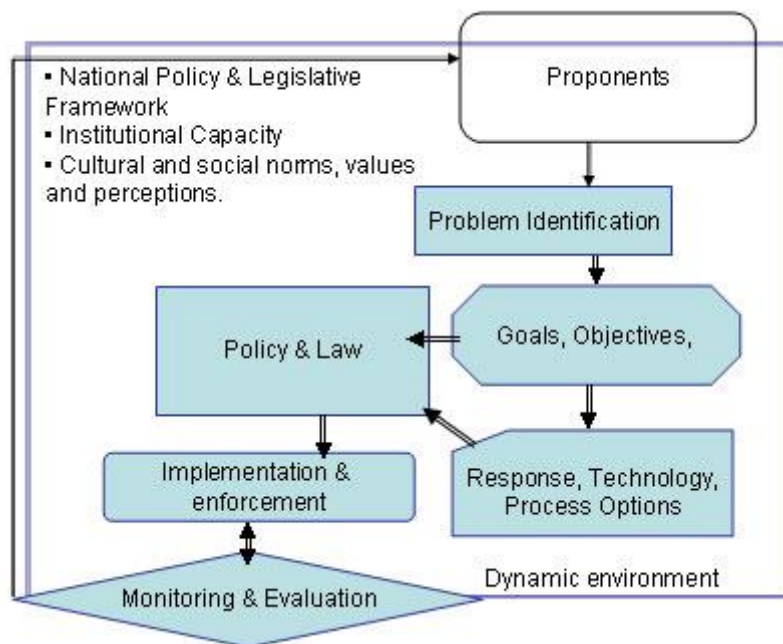
According to an article on understanding the policy process by Hatfield Consultants and the World Bank (2018), the policy process is a process through which policy is made and implemented. Public policies are developed by officials within government institution to address public issues through the political process. The article indicates that policymakers are faced with two distinct situations:

1. In the ideal situation, the policymakers jointly identify a desirable future condition, and then create policies and take actions to move toward that desired future state, monitoring progress to allow for necessary adjustments: or
2. In a less desirable situation, while unable to reach a consensus regarding a desirable future condition, policymakers try instead to move away from present situations judged as undesirable, even though no consensus exists about the preferred alternative.

Central to a policy-maker's capacity to understand and construct appropriate policy responses to a hazard is their ability to access and apply specialized forms of knowledge.

The policy process can also be summarized in the following figure.

Figure 1. Policy Process



Source: *Factors influencing the policy process, Hatfield consultants and the World Bank*

As shown in the Figure, policy is a continuous, iterative and complex process and the policy process can be identified as three interrelated processes:

1. Policy development in terms of what happens in the process through which a major policy initiative takes place;
2. Policy implementation and enforcement (how the policy is interpreted and enforced, what programs to implement it are initiated, what are the effects of these programs; and
3. Monitoring and evaluation (assess its impact and needs for improvement).

2.4 Policy Influence

Figure 1 above also shows that the policy process can be best influenced through a core working group or individuals that can draw on expertise of, and promote communication among, the various concerned agencies and other key stakeholders. This group with proper capacity and capabilities can support different phases of the policy process including identifying problems, setting a policy agenda and defining goals, developing policy and legislation, supporting their implementation and enforcement, and monitoring and evaluation.

The article by Hatfield Consultants and the World Bank (2018) mentioned above specifies that policy influences need to be translated into specific policy responses. This will depend on agents of change (or resistance) – individuals and institutions that are strategically placed and that will define the specific responses to these general influences at any one time.

Agents of change (or resistance) may include:

1. Key figures in the administration and the political system
2. People and institutions that are influential in determining whether a momentum for change builds up or is resisted

3. Formal lobbies and representations, the media and respected ‘public opinion formers’ who are critical in defining responses to event.

To influence, create, implement, and enforce policies, one must be able to help:

1. define problem situations,
2. provide informed options or responses, and
3. address many competing interests

The end goal is to improve policy makers’ ability to access and apply specialized forms of knowledge. Communication is an important element in policy making and ensures that an issue gets in the agenda of policy decision makers through different avenues such as:

1. regular policy making channels;
2. follow-up on earlier policy decisions;
3. public concerns raised by the media or experts;
4. interest group pressure;
5. the availability of new scientific information or new technologies; and
6. dominating events (disasters social changes)

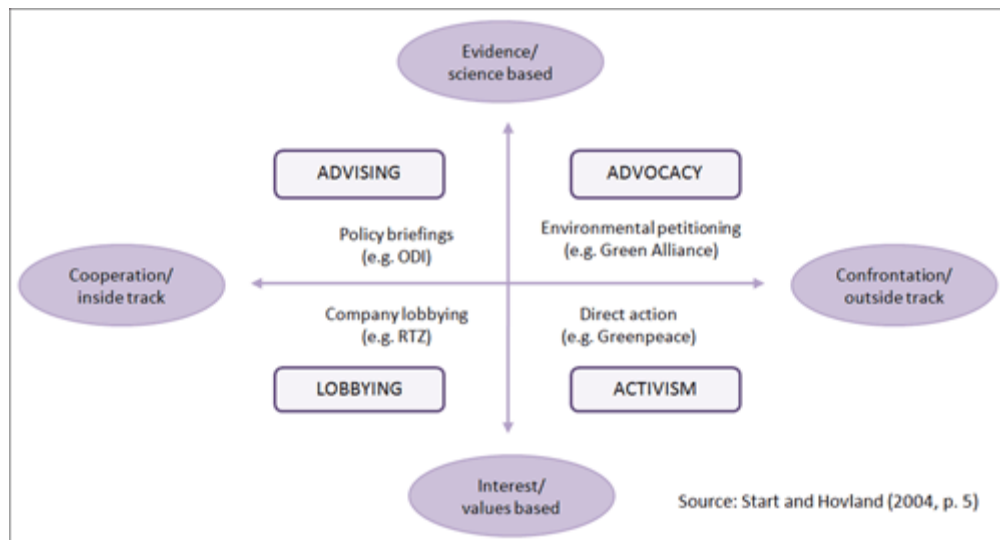
As Kirsty (2012) advances, even though communication is important, policy influence will need to be evidence-informed. Evidence-informed policy is policy which has reviewed and evaluated a range of evidence such as environmental, economic and social impacts of the research. A research that achieves impact on policy, based on effective communication only without having reviewed evidence, is certainly a policy influence however, may not achieve the best outcome. Policy influence should not only be based on effective communication, it should also be based on evidence to achieve the best outcomes. If policy makers are influenced by good communication alone for a given piece of research, then they will be persuaded by better communication of a different lobby group which may not have good intentions or outcomes. Think tanks will need to ensure that the research they carry out is policy-relevant but also effectively communicated to policy makers who will

need to examine the evidence base before deciding to adopt the policy. This implies that policy decision-makers have the capacity and incentives to consider the range of evidences forwarded by think tanks.

2.5 Types of Policy Influence

Hearn (2018) has identified four types of policy influence: advising, advocacy, activism or lobbying. These types of policy influence are dependent on a) the option of influencing which could either be confrontation or cooperation and b) the type of argument which could, either be evidence based or interest/value based. The following diagram illustrates how the four types or approaches of policy influencing are mapped to the dependent variables.

Figure 2. Types of Policy Influence



Source: Start and Hovland (2004, p.5)

When the option for influencing is cooperation or inside the policy decision makers and the type of argument is evidence based then the type of influence is considered as Advising. When we have a confrontational option of influencing or outside track (outside the policy community) combined with evidence based type of argument then the type of influence becomes Advocacy. When the cooperation option for influencing is combined with interest

or value based type of argument, then the type of influence becomes Lobbying. The final type of influence is Activism which consolidates confrontational option for influencing with interest or values based type of argument.

2.6 Measuring influence of Think Tanks

According to David Ricci (1993) measuring the influence of think tanks is almost impossible. He affirms:

When institutes like Brookings and AEI promote ideas, they can never be sure what effect those intangible entities will have on other Washingtonians, no matter how suggestible. While investigating the subject, I looked closely at what think tanks are doing, from books to seminars to briefings to breakfast meetings. I also asked fellows and managers to tell me what results they thought their activities would produce. The more I saw and heard, the more I understood that no one can know precisely what is happening in this drama.

Through his study which attempts to measure the influence of American and Canadian think tanks, Abelson (1998 and 2002) also comes to adopt this viewpoint. Hearn advances that policy change is a complex process, and as a result it is difficult to isolate the impact of a particular intervention from the influence of other factors as well as from the various policy actors. Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation tools used for such interventions can also be difficult to implement in these contexts. Hearn proposes different tools for evaluating policy impact for the following approaches of policy influence.

Advising

According to Hearn, this approach to influence policy is used by research institutions whose academic research can be evaluated through peer reviews and the number of citations in research publications. However, these are not sufficient to evaluate policy influence. It is important to take into consideration the context of the situation without however, overemphasizing it because excessive inclusion of contextual information would make it impossible to claim impact of a certain intervention.

Boaz et al (2009) present a comprehensive review of popular options used in evaluating the impact of research on policy which includes: ethnography and quantitative approaches,

focus groups, process tracing, and network mapping and analysis. Using mixed option approaches is useful however, the use of qualitative approach such as semi-structured interviews, documentary analysis, field visits and observations are more suitable for the analysis of research impact on policy.

Another popular method for measuring think tanks' relative influence on policy making is media citations. Media citation, parliamentary testimony, size of membership and distribution of publications, can therefore only be a good indicator of think tanks' visibility (Abelson, 1998). In this context, those think tanks who are adversarial with government will earn a lot of media citation. However, the government or state will not have taken on the advice of such think tanks and will not have been influenced. In this case, this would therefore imply that media citations may not be a good measure of think tanks' influence on policy.

Advocacy

According to Hearn (2018), this type of policy influence relies on building public support for a new policy through public messaging and campaigning to involve a large group of individuals. Measuring the influence of advocacy activities, particularly when the public preferences change, is a difficult task. Surveys or focus groups are some of the options that help measure and understand attitudes and preferences of a given group. Monitoring the media could also help in explaining behavioral changes. Another method that can be used to evaluate advocacy impact on policy change is through fieldwork such as the use of interviews, document analysis, detailed review of arguments and decisions, news analysis, and documentation of the campaign itself until the most valid explanation is reached in a way similar to using forensic approach.

Lobbying

Lobbying relies on informal interactions and takes place in a highly fluid context therefore it is very hard to capture and analyze lobbying in a standardized way. Despite this, the following can be used to measure the contribution of lobbying to policy change: recording

observations from meetings and negotiations, interviewing informants, conducting qualitative and in-depth analysis of different aspects of lobbying activities. Also, dividing lobbying into smaller components such as 'Need to Know', 'Need to Inform' and 'Need to Negotiate' helps to evaluate its impact on influencing. Another way of evaluating lobbying is through the use of the following categories: the ability to build relationship, perseverance, organizing the grassroots, coalition building, ability to motivate and communicate with various target groups, proficiency in the use of communication technologies, knowledge of the basics about the legislative process, and the organizational structure.

Activism

The activism approach to make a policy change is through pressure and confrontation, and therefore operates outside of policy communities. Despite the fact that activism is an important way to change policy, there is little academic study that is dedicated to analyze the options and tools used by activist organizations.

Another perspective on measuring policy influence is outlined by Tsui (2013) who aligns monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools to the existing influencing types:

Table 1. Typology of influencing activities and the tools for M&E

Type of influencing	Where to influence (channels)	Outcomes (what to measure)	How to measure (tools)
Evidence and advice	- National and international policy discourses/debates - Formal and informal meetings	Outputs	Evaluating research reports, policy briefs and websites
		Uptake and use	Logs; new areas for citation analysis; user surveys
		Influence	RAPID outcome assessment; episode studies; most significant change
Public campaigns and advocacy	- Public and political debates - Public meetings, speeches, presentations - Television, newspapers, radio and other media	Target audience attitudes, behaviours	Surveys, focus groups, direct responses
		Media attention	media tracking logs, media assessment
		Media framing and influence	Framing analysis, coverage
Lobbying and negotiation	- Formal meetings - Semi-formal and informal channels - Membership and participation in boards and committees	Actors; relationships; policy processes and institutions	Recording meetings; tracking people; interviewing key informants; probing influence
Soft power	Informal meetings; collaborative group settings	Influence of decision making	Interviews, probing influence

Source: Tsui, J. (2013)

According to Tsui, because NGOs use multiple approaches to influence policy, multiple approaches to evaluate policy influence should be used. There are a lot of guides on how to measure influence however the effectiveness of these guides is debated. Also, rigor has not been applied to the methods of evaluations. The methods for evaluating advocacy is new and not well developed. As a result, NGOs have difficulty in carrying out evaluations in a robust, rigorous and replicable manner. Evaluations are conducted in terms of inputs, activities or outputs and not in terms of outcome or impact.

The problems in evaluating advocacy, as outlined by Tsui (2013), are the following:

- 1) Causal relationships are problematic. It is complex to link advocacy initiatives to outcomes.
- 2) Subjective gains: There are varied opinions of significance of gains. Further political goals can often shift depending on the circumstances.
- 3) Multiple approaches: Influencing can be part of many approaches including lobbying, advocacy, or campaigning. It may be difficult to assess which approaches lead to impact.
- 4) Long horizons: Influencing work is long term. Change can be slow and incremental.
- 5) Changing circumstances: As a result of a fluid environment, it is rarely repeated or replicated and as a result, there is rarely an accumulation of knowledge.
- 6) Conflictual process: Influencing often means engaging in a process that may have political consequences.

Tsui indicates that some experts debate that it is possible to measure influence in the context of personal communication. However, the measurement is imperfect due to the imbalance of quantitative metrics with the need for meaningful analysis.

The consequences of the preference of quantifiable metrics are:

1. M&E that focuses on what is inherently quantifiable such as outputs and activities
2. The attempt to quantify qualitative information such as rating scores

However, these methods do not robustly document impact as the first method doesn't link the output to impact and the second one is based on subjective assessment. Therefore, rigor and robust documentation are lacking.

Some of the recommended approaches to evaluating influence by some evaluators, as reported by Tsui, is to assess the contribution of change rather than direct attribution. This is because attribution to change is difficult to trace as policy objective and impact happen over a long period of time following the research. The other recommendation put forward by the evaluators is to use the Network Functions Approach or Social Network Analysis in order to monitor progress of developing strong networks, as research institutions work in research partnerships.

2.7 Factors Affecting Policy Influence

We can identify a number of factors that affect policy influence. These are institutional factors, cultural and social norms, economic factors, competitive policy environment, political and legal framework, policy approaches. An explanation on how these factors impact policy influence is provided below.

Institutional Factors

According to Abelson (2002), one of the factors that affect think tanks' influence on policy making is the institutional structure. The first one is enabling political structures or institutional factors. The following quote from Abelson illustrates this:

With a government based on separate branches sharing power, a party system in which members of Congress are free to vote as they wish, and a growing number of presidential candidates trying to develop new ideas, [American] think tanks have multiple opportunities to shape public opinion and public policy.

Abelson, while comparing the US institutional structure with that of Canada partakes that parliamentary systems such as that of Canada do not provide the required opportunities for think tanks to influence policy decision making.

Carden (2009) explains that structures, capabilities and incentives of institutions such as central government agencies, local government, NGOs, the private sector, political parties and organized religion affect policy influence. Stability of decision-making institutions is imperative. Rapid turnover of governments is not very conducive for research to translate into policy and for researchers to develop relationships with policy-makers. Continuity is important in this regard. Also, when there is an institutional and leadership gap despite adequate interest from policy-makers, the policy environment does not become conducive for use of data and knowledge. There is a need to build leadership and institutional infrastructure within this context in order to enable research to have an impact.

Carden emphasizes that research can lead to better governance in three ways: by opening up new avenues of inquiry and debate, by empowering citizens with knowledge to hold their governments accountable, and by expanding the menu of policy options available for policy-makers as they seek to address salient public policy issues.

Carden suggests that research can have an influence in highly centralized and decentralized systems of governance alike. The cases of Philippines (highly decentralized) and Vietnam (highly centralized) underscore that both systems are open to research if presented well. Aligning a project's plan with prevailing political structures is more important.

Cultural factors

The other factor for influencing policy is the cultural setup within a country. As explained by Abelson (1998), the difference arises in terms of the presence of a strong or vocal entrepreneurial class in the private sector in the US, which provide leadership in the creation of think tanks providing advice to government as opposed to the cultural set up in Canada where the public sector itself leads on policy making through its senior public

servants. There is a cultural contrast affecting policy influence, between individualism through private entrepreneurship for the US and communitarianism for Canada.

Economic factors

The third factor is economic. As affirmed by Abelson and Carberry (1998), stable funding allows think tanks to work on long-term research projects which enables them to forge strong relationships with policy-makers which in turn allows them to establish visibility and relevance in the policy making process. Abelson and Carberry also explain that think tanks in the US receive no money from Government. Rather, their source of funding is from donations from foundations, corporations and individuals. However, in Canada, the funding source for think tanks is mainly government contracts and grants. Spending cuts within government would lead to the closure of think tanks. Think tanks relying on government will come across financial uncertainty which may hinder their research planning and ability to plan for long term projects. Tax laws have facilitated the creation and growth of think tanks as they are created as non-profit and therefore acquire tax-exempt status. This status however, limits them from working on political activities.

Competitive policy environment

In an environment where competition amongst policy institutes exists, innovation and knowledge will be brought about. This would trigger debates and discussion and enriches the evidence base of the produced research. The research produced in a competitive environment ensures relevance and provides opportunity for think tanks to be considered by policy makers. Carden (2009) indicates that think tanks should also stand ready to grasp opportunities from the policy-maker demand.

He believes that knowledge and research can have a positive impact on building the capacities of policy-makers in different contexts, enabling them to be better informed while making policies. It is important to educate and build capacity of policy-makers in order to enable them to engage effectively with research findings. When policy-makers are

educated and well informed, policy processes are enhanced and there is a greater chance for research to have a positive impact.

Carden (2009) also asserts that research broadens policy horizons, expanding the scope of concepts covered that will invariably broaden the agenda by bringing in new ideas and knowledge previously not considered. Policy-makers will then have a much broader outlook and be encouraged to think outside the box to address problems.

Political space and legal environment

The political context determines who can participate in policy and how, and defines the legitimacy of policy actors and governance associated with policy processes (Hatfield Consultants and the World Bank, February 2018). Carden (2009) emphasizes that research can impact overarching policy regimes by opening up policy processes and operational procedures of the government. Also, countries in political, economic and social transition remain sites for policy innovation and experimentation, thereby increasing the need and call for research. Nations embroiled in economic crises/pressures are more open towards research since policy-makers are in dire need of ideas to turn the tide. Crises represent an opportunity for the policy research community.

According to Carden, there are three contextual situations for policy influence: the first one is when policy-makers are interested in research but there are insufficient resources in order for research to seep into policy. In the second context, policy-makers are neutral to research, which makes it challenging for research to have a tangible influence. Communication of research is more important in this scenario given the lukewarm attitude towards the research community. The third context, policy-makers are largely disinterested and even hostile towards research within this context. In this situation, policy influencing using evidence-based approaches can break down quickly. Patience and persistence is critical in order to bring salient issues to the table.

Ofosu-Appiah (2017) also affirms that getting an idea on the governmental agenda requires persistence, expertise, cultivating the right connections and above all good timing. Think

tanks need to be adequately resourced so as to be able to continuously and persistently cultivate an idea as they await the right moment to mobilize an alliance of support around it.

Think tanks must find a way of communicating and engaging with the public who are the real beneficiaries of good public policy. Sometimes, when think tanks seek to bring about change, they battle resistance from different sources including government inertia, prevailing social customs, established power relationships etc. In a situation like that, they need to indulge in advocacy more forcefully and visibly.

A legal framework directed towards regulating civil society is a normal and good practice. However, laws such as the Charities and Societies Proclamation (621/2009) that are considered excessively many (NGO Law Monitor: Ethiopia – Ethiopian Legal Brief; Amnesty International, 2012) undermine civil society operations. The features that are criticized as disproportionate are the administrative restrictions placed on civil society organizations. The law requires organizations to register as Ethiopian Charities or Societies, Ethiopian Resident Charities or Societies or Foreign Charities. Only Ethiopian Charities and Societies may work on human rights issues and cannot receive more than ten percent of their funding from foreign sources. Also, organizations are not permitted to spend more than 30 percent of their budget on ‘administrative costs’. The lack of definition of administrative costs means that the provision could be interpreted to include costs for advocacy, free legal aid etc. Infringements of the law can lead to heavy fines or terms of imprisonment for NGO staff. Also, the Charities and Societies Agency which is the government body that regulates NGOs has broad discretionary powers over NGOs, including government surveillance and direct involvement in the running of the organizations, and the power to suspend licenses and confiscate and transfer the assets of any organizations (Amnesty International, 2012). In this context, civil society’s main concern will be to dwell disproportionately on administrative issues in order to ensure compliance to cumbersome regulations without which, they would cease to survive and face criminal proceedings. In an article posted by Freedom House on 22 July 2016, it is indicated that the Agency announced in June 2016, the closure of more than 200 NGOs in

the last nine months. The reasons that were cited are failure to comply with numerous requirements of the Charities and Societies Proclamation and lack of funding. According to the article, the latest directive issued by the agency preceding the announcement gives the agency quasi-judicial powers in criminal proceedings.

Policy influence approaches/Sources of influence

According to Glaser and Saunders (2002), policy influence requires both a pathway and a channel to reach policy makers and reasons for policy-makers to pay attention to an analyst's views. An understanding of potential sources of influence is therefore useful in interpreting the significance of the statements or writings of a particular analyst. Some sources of influence also affect the pathways an analyst can use to reach policy makers. Four sources are identified. These may somewhat overlap but they are still useful analytically.

Positional influence. This is influence by think tanks due to their institutional position or relationship within the government, policy making body or due to access to classified information through institutional channels. In China, this is based on regulations which stipulate which research units can use certain channels for submitting papers to the leadership. The influence of think tanks depends on the importance and relevance of the topic and whether staff members flag a report for a policy maker's attention. Positional influence tends to endure even though there are changes in personnel as it originates from formal position within the government. Positional influence is the most important source of influence as direct influencing opportunities are opened up due to access to classified information, direct reporting channels to policy makers and organizational ties to policy-makers.

Expertise influence. This is based on expert knowledge of a technical subject. This expertise can be found in certain think tanks. Government officials can either ask think tanks for advice on certain technical issues or the institutes themselves can organize conferences to boost their reputation within China and increase influence. The expertise can also be held by individuals which are consulted for their knowledge. Expertise

influence can either be provided through official policy channels or through open broadcast media and publishing industry. Although most academic books and articles do not reach policy makers they push the boundaries of policy debates and influence public opinion, which will help build the analyst's reputation.

Personal influence. This is the most important source as well as the hardest to document. The classic type of personal influence is the one that is based on personal relationship. The other type of personal influence is through personal relationship based on educational qualifications such as attendance at the same schools between think tanks analysts and classmates who progress to policy maker level. A third type is based on geographic ties, whereby academicians are placed.

Some of the policy influencing approaches that some think tanks resort to is to build policy or personal networks. Indeed, Abelson (1998) recommends that think tanks that operate in parliamentary institutional environment should establish a close tie with a political party or a leader in order to successfully influence decision makers with their policy agenda. The caveat here is that the think tanks may lose their tax-exempt status. This is the case of think tanks in Britain which are able to undertake a meaningful role in policy-making which Canadian Think tanks have not been able to do so. Under this category, Abelson (1998) recommends for think tanks to recruit former policy-makers and prominent academics to provide policy relevant advice, noting this is subject to financial availability. This example could also apply under the expertise source of influence.

Experiential influence. Information obtained from studying, living and contacts from abroad could potentially be a source of experiential influence on policy-makers. In the case of China, the professionalization of the Chinese foreign policy system means that academic and foreign travel are becoming important credentials. Analysts' reports become more credible if they have access to senior US policy-makers or prominent scholars and cite these authoritative sources in their reports. Also, analysts who used to work in Chinese foreign ministry in the past, possess diplomatic experience which builds their credibility. In

addition, the connections that these analysts had established in the past serves them to influence policy-makers.

2.8 Pathways to Policy Influence

Glaser and Saunders (2002) propose that it is important to understand the pathways through which policy is influenced. They have identified six channels for Chinese foreign policy think tanks to reach policy makers.

Internal reports

Internal reports are the principal product of Chinese research institutes and the most regular means through which foreign policy analysis reaches senior leaders and policy makers. These reports can contain classified information and present policy recommendations, and are forwarded to policy makers through official channels.

Small group policy meetings

Small group policy meetings whereby policy analysts are invited to provide their assessments. Reports from lower level policy meetings are also given to policy makers which will constitute the basis for policy decisions.

Informal consultations with policy makers

Informal consultations with policy makers who solicit advice on policy issues from research institute analysts. This happens based on the research institute's reputation from previous reports or personal relationship with a policy maker.

Internal conferences

Internal conferences are also used to bring together experts on a particular subject to exchange views. The report is then sent to policy makers and policy community.

Appearances in National or Western media

Appearances in the media, whether television or newspaper, are another way for think tanks to influence policy makers.

Academic Articles and Books

Academic article and books are also another means of influencing policy. Open publications are different from internal reports as classified information and detailed policy recommendations are removed before publication. These also do not have political views.

2.9 Roles of Think Tanks in Influencing Policy

According to an article on the usefulness of think tanks by John de Boer (2015), Rohinton Medhora is quoted as answering the question ‘What are think tanks good for?’ as “influence peddling, in the best sense of the term”. Medhora also indicates that the litmus test of a good think tank was not whether it was ‘right, left, liberal or not but whether it was proposing evidence-based discussion’. The article acknowledges that ‘the dominant understanding is that Think Tanks exist to mobilize expertise and ideas to influence the policy making process’. It also indicates that think tanks broker ideas, stimulate public debate, and offer creative yet practical solutions to tackle the world’s most pressing problems.

According to Sammut (2016), think tanks ‘engage in the battle of ideas by providing research based advocacy and evidence based commentary on pertinent issues’. However, some think tanks prefer not to disclose their funding source as they fear politically motivated attacks and would distract the public from the merit of the think tanks. Sammut thinks these think tanks need to be honest and transparent. The assumption is that disclosing the financial statements ensures ethics however, this begs the question: how does full disclosure reassure that think tanks are not advocating for that particular organization’s political stand?

Tyler (2015) affirms that the role of think tanks is to convert knowledge into practice. In order to ensure that their recommendations are useable they need to connect with policy-makers' and their agendas. A communication plan is important for this. However, their focus on influence will detract them from their independence, considered key for think tanks, as influence requires engagement and responsiveness to policy-makers. There needs to be a balance between influence and independence.

According to Shallowe (2017), think tanks will need to question and adapt their existing model in order for innovative solutions to address the lives of all people and leave no one behind. Think tanks must move beyond their traditional core model and innovate. They should act politically and exercise power and influence when necessary. Shallowe suggests three directions for innovation:

1. Political insights: think tanks should explicitly develop the expertise and knowledge of the local political context, for example through carrying out 'political and power' assessments on any given issue.
2. Elite convening: think tanks could develop function that not only facilitates debate and discussion between key interest groups, but which looks to identify collective interests and coordinate actions across different stakeholders to help bring about policy change.
3. Campaigns and alliances: think tanks may mean engage in more bottom-up approaches to policy influence, leveraging the power of citizens and communities to press the case for reform.

Conceptual Framework framed by the researcher

Independent variables



Dependent variables



Intervening variables



Chapter Three

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Method

The research method that is used for this thesis is qualitative research as the subject matter is not quantifiable. The research seeks to identify the role of the two organizations under study in the policy making process, to explore and compare the trends, the evolution of the organizations and their challenges and opportunities in the policy making process. Therefore the application of qualitative research design is the most appropriate method for the research thesis at hand. The qualitative data helped identify themes which were reviewed and interpreted in order to answer the research questions.

3.2 Data Source and Data Gathering tools

The data source for this research was both primary and secondary sources. The tools that were used for collecting primary data were questionnaires and in-depth key informant interview.

Both the questionnaires and the interviews were guided by semi-structured questions. The use of the questionnaires was meant to complement the in-depth interview. The complementary use of both of these tools has helped to better understand and interpret the issues at hand.

The secondary data was used from materials collected such as EEA's Annual Performance reports, unpublished internal report, the 2017 Global Go To Think Tank Index.

3.3 Sampling Techniques

Purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the two think tanks under study: EEA and FSS. These think tanks were selected based on their similarity in terms of experience and maturity. They contribute to policy advice and knowledge generation, through their publications, and have long years' experience (27 years for EEA and 20 years FSS). The think tanks also share similarity in their nature of being independent. Independent in our case is defined as not being part of government and having views different or neutral from

government. The selection of these think tanks would enable to identify their roles and trajectories in the policy making process. Because of the similarity of the selected think tanks, the sampling technique used would either reinforce the similarity of the findings or disprove it. This would make it easy to discover and compare the evolution pattern of two similar think tanks.

The sampling technique that was used in selecting the participants in both organizations is purposive sampling. From the intended sample of 11 respondents, 100% of respondents were able to take part in the study. The sample included 6 professional staff in the EEA and 5 professional staff in FSS such as researchers and senior management. The sample size was limited to 6 and 5 respectively in EEA and FSS because that was the number of researchers and senior management staff who were knowledgeable in the policy influence area and therefore able and available to advise and provide responses on the thesis topic. The purposive sampling technique ensured that the data gathered was obtained from knowledgeable individuals aware of the subject matter of research, policy influence and overall understanding of the realities in the policy making process which will in turn help address the research questions. Because these organizations are working on skeleton staff, the research has taken two similar think tanks not only to increase the sample size but also to verify and reinforce the findings. The representativeness of the number of informants is justified by the fact that the informants were long serving members in the organizations and knowledgeable in the area of study. The following table depicts the categories of respondents.

Table 2. Breakdown of Data Type

	EEA	FSS	Total
Questionnaires	4	3	7
In-depth key informant interview	2	2	4
Total	6	5	11

Source: researchers own data (April 2018)

The Gender composition of the respondents was 1 female and 100 males. Also, all of the respondent were at the post-graduate level and had research and middle to executive level management responsibility. There was only one assistant researcher in EEA but his stay in the organization was above 5 years. 8 of the respondents stayed for more than 5 years in their respective organizations whereas 5 stayed between 3 to 5 years.

3.4 Method of Data Analysis

The method of data analysis is descriptive. Responses from the questionnaires, interviews and desk review were compiled and analyzed through the use of word descriptions and percentages. The findings were interpreted and categorized separately for each organization in a table. An analysis was then drawn for each organization based on comparing and contrasting the findings of each of the categories of issues and a discussion of each of these issues was presented.

Chapter Four

4. Data Presentation, Discussion and Analysis

Policy making process comprises a number of stages including agenda setting stage, policy formulation or decision making stage, implementation stage and evaluation stages. Think tanks which participate in the policy making process may contribute to any of the above mentioned policy making stages. However, determining the real impact that a think tank has on policy influence and identifying its exact contribution can be very difficult. The policy process is made up by a number of interactions such as inflow of policy evidence and recommendation, political motivation, other conflicting policy positions. Nevertheless, the roles of the think tanks under study, the relevance of their policy research topics and the challenges and opportunities encountered are assessed comparatively in order to either reinforce the findings in case of similarity or contrast the differences if the emerging findings are different.

4.1 Role of the Think Tanks on Influencing Policy Decision Making

Although measuring the policy influence of think tanks is a challenging task and identifying linear linkages is almost impossible, as supported by the literature, there are a number of indirect ways of measuring think tanks' influence on policy decision making. It is therefore important to look at the selected think tanks' roles in terms of proxy-indicators to determine their contribution to policy influence.

4.1.1 Assessment of Roles and Activities of EEA and FSS

The main role of the EEA is to provide evidence that can be used in policy formulation. It provides empirical evidence on how and to what extent policy intervention work. It also develops policy analysis tools. EEA has delivered a number of short courses and trainings and is also now planning to establish a training institute for graduate studies in development economics as part of its current five-year strategic plan. EEA use a variety of mechanisms to communicate their research outputs such as publications, workshops, one-to-ones, conferences and policy seminars to various audiences.

However, EEA are not reactive in using social media to transmit their messages. Research that is carried out and disseminated in publications could be through various kinds of reports such as research briefs or policy briefs presented to policy-makers. The way EEA's research activities, outputs and publications are communicated is by ensuring that research outputs are distributed periodically to all stakeholders through publications. Research outputs of the organization are in wide circulation in the country. For example, as evidenced on EEA's performance report of 2013-2014, EEA has distributed 1,170 different types of publications in that year to donors, government officials, universities, EEA sub-divisions in the regions, members and guests. Wide dissemination of the products would enable technocrats and academic staff to refer to the research recommendations.

Moreover, publications are on current policy issues such as growth, finance, trade, industrialization, agricultural development, health, education, poverty, food security and climate change and outputs and show the implications of different policy decisions. As a result government ministries use the results as input to policy formulation when they design policy or revise it. To illustrate, EEA conducted in 2014, the 5th National Health Account for the Ministry of Health. One of the main recommendations was to prioritize Non Communicable Disease (NCD) for policy action by the Ministry. In subsequent years, the ministry formulated and adopted a NCD strategy. Moreover, EEA organizes various workshops and conferences at Federal and Regional level in which policy makers are often in attendance. The research institute also organizes panel discussions on contemporary economic issues and invites relevant government stakeholders to participate in the discussions. The conferences organized at the Federal level are various event such as annual international conferences on the Ethiopian Economy which has now reached the 15th series which the former Prime Minister made the official opening, the annual conference of the African Regional Chapter of Econometric Society (19th) and at the regional level, these are the Eastern region annual conference which reached the 6th, the 8th Amhara Regional State economic development conference (8th), the Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's regional state economic development conference whereby regional presidents attend.

The target audience is the general public, policy actors or government offices (federal and regional), the private sector, academia, donors and the non-state actors. Specific audiences from the government offices are Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation (MoFEC), Ministry of Trade (MoT), Ministry of Industry (MoI) and the National Planning Commission (NPC) under the MoFEC. In addition, the specific target audience for the output of the organization depends on the type of subject under consideration. The variety of the audiences such as the general public, civil society, academia, the private sector and non-government stakeholders also enable a diversified mechanism to reach out to policy-makers as these empowered audiences will have different opportunities and access to policy-makers. EEA do not consider seminars, conferences, workshops and publication as an end by themselves. They indicate they are the means to communicate to stakeholders and policy-makers. However, for policy-makers, results shared through seminars constitute an end by themselves because they become input for policy formulation.

Similarly, the activities that FSS proposes to do to achieve its overarching objective are through research which enables informed policy; public dialogue which brings a tradition of informed, civilized and diverse policy debate which in turn enable to review policies and look at different dynamics affecting the policy; information dissemination through publication, audio, audio-visual, electronics; outreach program to policy-makers, the general public, users through radio, print media, electronic media, social media in order to inform and debate; and finally service provision such as research, publication, supporting, networking, partnership. FSS library is also part of the support they provide. FSS have also provided many training program and are planning to deliver capacity building program as a core program in the future.

Through these activities the role of the organization is therefore to provide alternative policy options, discourses, approaches and views to mainstream policy discourse and practice.

The audience for research outputs produced by FSS is also similar to that of EEA. These are various stakeholders such as government officials, policy planners and influencers, members of civil society organizations, NGOs, donors, international organizations, the media and the public. Research commissioning parties such as different stakeholders or part-

ners and donors, multilateral and bilateral organizations are also audiences of FSS' research products.

The means of communication that FSS uses to convey its message to these stakeholders is through a well thought out policy communication strategy which includes: publications and dissemination of books, monographs, policy briefs, E-Newsletters; organizing public dialogue forums and other public events (conferences, workshops and consultations); media outreach programs (print and electronic), digital tools such as YouTube and Facebook. FSS tries to diversify its means of communication as they believe using different channels may be efficient to certain groups. FSS disseminate publications and policy briefs to relevant target groups. They distribute publications to libraries, bookstores, relevant government or non-government bodies.

Scope of work of EEA and FSS

EEA's work is not limited to the economic area or domain as seems to suggest their name. EEA works on various important multi-sectorial issues such as agriculture, industry, health, poverty concerns so their results are directed to many sector or line ministries like the Ministry of Agriculture (MoA), Ministry of Industry (MoI), Ministry of Health (MoH) and Ministry of Education (MoE) and not only to the Ministry of Finance. EEA has submitted research publications to important policy-makers to ensure that results are produced on socio-economic problems. EEA also contributes to the capacity building effort of policy makers. It provides trainings on policy related topics. Also, EEA has broadened its scope of activities from national to sub-national in 2009/10 through its sub-divisions established in major towns of the country.

FSS researches key social and economic issues such as health, trade, land, agriculture which are featured on FSS publications. These same issues are part of government plans and are presented in government policies. For instance, FSS published policy debate series on land entitled 'Land to Investors: Large Scale Land Transfers in Ethiopia'.

Both organizations are registered as resident charities. Engaging in advocacy work and on the specific topics of governance, human rights and democracy are therefore out of their

mandates. As a result, EEA and FSS no longer work on advocacy and their previous scope of work is limited.

Stages of policy making

According to the data collected, EEA contributes to participating in the agenda setting stage by informing the policy process. EEA avails a range of socio-economic policy analysis on the areas of agricultural development, education, finance, industrialization, growth, poverty, health, trade, food security and climate change. This is disseminated through its various publication which includes Research Reports, Annual Economic Report, Ethiopian Journal of Economics, Quarterly Economic Report, Proceeding of Conferences, Research and Policy Briefs over the last 20 years, and most particularly since the establishment of its research wing the Ethiopian Economic Policy Research Institute (EEPRI) in 2000. For example, the 2014 Economic Report on the Ethiopian Economy had the following thematic topics: Small and Micro Enterprises (SMEs) Development in Ethiopia: Policies, Performance, Constraints and Prospects; Technology (ex-ante) assessment and farm household segmentation for inclusive poverty reduction and sustainable growth in Agriculture; and Poverty Dynamics, Health Shocks and Coping Strategies in Ethiopia. This contributes towards setting government's policy agenda. In addition, EEA sometimes engages through expert opinion on discussion aimed at policy formulation stage such as through the SNNPR tax potential study, as well as at evaluation stage. EEA have been engaged in impact evaluations of various public policies, such as on land, industrialization, health extension, community based health insurance etc. EEA also give policy evaluation studies, policy performance assessments and recommendations. Working on policy evaluation area indirectly testifies recognition of the expertise within EEA. A respondent of the questionnaire indicated that participating on the stages of policy formulation, decision making and implementation are not mandates of EEA. This could be interpreted as the political context of Ethiopia does not permit independent organizations such as EEA to participate in internal stages of the policy cycle such as policy formulation and implementation.

All researchers within FSS are entitled to reflect their own views in their research. It is possible to find papers with different views and opinions in a single volume on a given topic.

This means different perspectives are allowed, although not as an organization, but on the research findings which contribute to enriching public dialogue and civilized debate, based on fact. These are not right or wrong points, they only reflect different perspectives on the same issue. In terms of research outputs, FSS carries out a quality assurance role by reviewing the quality of the outputs, their academic credibility and whether conclusions are based on scientific methodology. Allowing varying perspective to be aired provides a good platform for discussion and will ensure that sufficient consideration is given to the topic.

Similarly, the stages FSS participate in are the agenda setting stage through problem analysis and evidence based recommendation and communication of results of research level. FSS also participates at evaluation stage through the research they conduct and evaluate policy implementation. However, FSS feel they have the capacity to participate at any stage depending on the availability of the space to make the contribution.

Measuring policy influence

EEA considers policy influence as one of its objectives, however recognizes that it is very difficult to measure policy influence and it is a tough process by itself. EEA therefore uses anecdotal evidences to measure its impact on policy making including demand for the services and product produced. EEA also considers recognition given to the institute by policy makers such as references made by government documents, government interests in its publications, comments, invitation to workshops as indicators of positive contribution in the policy-making process. EEA also gages the successfulness of its policy influence through mechanisms such as expert invitation to take part in public policy discussion forums, dissemination of research outputs, citation of work done by the organization, demand for professional services to carry out research on government policies and program. The organization analyses content of policy reforms that are related to earlier recommendations of work done by the organization which it considers as a crucial task to find out research influence on government's policy reforms, if the later knowingly or unknowingly fails to acknowledge research recommendations as input to their reforms. EEA feels this is particularly necessary to detect the indirect effect of the recommendation given by the organization.

The key informants from EEA also affirmed that policy formulation is based on evidence and due to the training provided the capacity of policy makers has improved. Also EEA, through its various research activities and workshops, has promoted the culture of dialogue and has empowered the general public or the private sector to use evidence in their engagement with policy actors. EEA has also increased awareness and knowledge of policy-makers about potential consequences, positive as well as negative outcomes of policies they opt to implement.

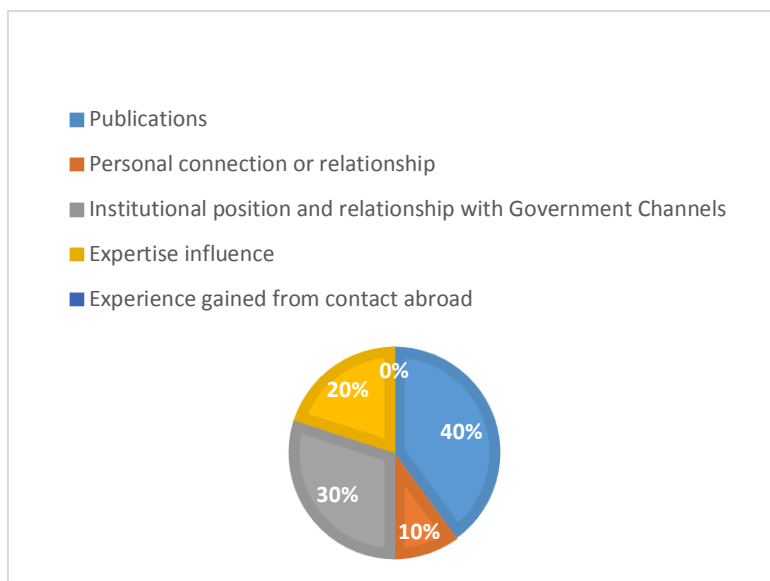
From the data gathered by the researcher, a few examples reflecting the successful policy influence that EEA achieved through the above mentioned approaches and measurement mechanisms are listed below:

1. Annual and regional conferences are officially opened by high government officials - the 15th International conference on the Ethiopian Economy, which coincided with EEA's 25th Anniversary and which was co-organized by EEA, IFPRI and Ethiopian Development Research Institute (EDRI) and held from 20-22 July 2017, was officially opened by former Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn.
2. The existence of huge demand for EEA research outputs
3. Participation of the research institute in various ad hoc and standing committees: the Principal Researcher of EEPRI is a member of the Academic Boards of the CPP of the AERC and Debre Berhan University; the Principal Researcher of EEPRI served as member of the DAAD scholarship (Germany) committee; the Principal Researcher of EEPRI is a member of the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences and members of the fund raising subcommittee; the head of the Macroeconomic division is a board member of the Board of Woldiya University; The Head of EEA Secretariat serving as a board member Poverty Action Network of Ethiopia (PANE) and attended many meetings; The Head of EEA Secretariat serving as a chair person at CSOs 2012 AGOA Forum preparation that was held from August 9-13, 2013 at AU Conference Center.
4. EEA's work on industrialization policy and strategy of 2003/2004 was used to inform GTP I

5. EEA's work on Supply Side Constraints to Ethiopian exports was used by MoT
6. Research output like SNNPR tax potential study was applicable to the region and revision study for the second time was carried out
7. Higher government officials short term capacity building training on policy formulation area develop skills of policy makers
8. Workshop to selected stakeholders
9. In 2014, EEA conducted the 5th National Health Account for the Ministry of Health, and one of the main recommendations was to prioritize Non Communicable Disease (NCD) for policy action by the Ministry. In subsequent years, the ministry formulated adopted a NCD strategy.

The approach followed for the above successful examples of influencing policy and as gathered through questionnaires by the researcher are described in the figure 3 below. This shows that publications were the most widely used approach (40%) which delivered positive policy influence for the specific examples presented above, followed by institutional positions and relationships with government channels (30%), then comes expertise influence (20%) and finally personal connection and relationship with only 10%. Experience gained from contact abroad was not an approach used in the above context (0%).

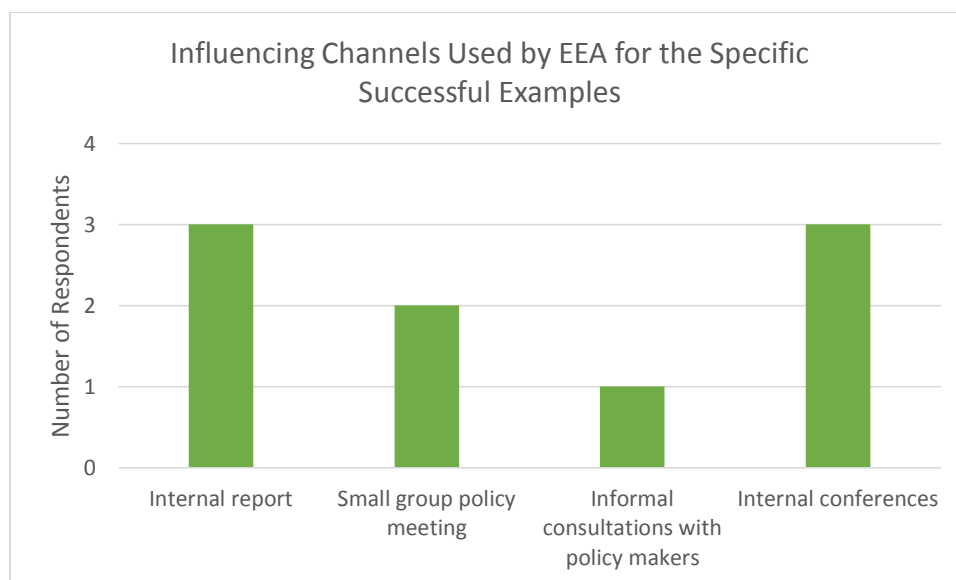
Figure 3. Policy Influencing Approaches Used by EEA for Specific Successful Policy Examples



Source: *Researcher's own data (April 2018)*

The influencing channels that were used for the above listed successful policy influencing examples are summarized in Figure 4 below. The data gathered from questionnaires indicates that internal reports and internal conferences were the channels that were used to achieve the successful policy influences (3 out of 4 respondents), followed by small group policy meeting (2 respondents) and only 1 respondent believing this was done through informal consultations with policy makers.

Figure 4. Influencing Channels Used by EEA for the Specific Successful Policy Influencing Examples



Source: *Researcher's own data (April 2018)*

Besides the mid-term and end of year review that EEA carries out in order to assess its performance, some of its stakeholders also carry out their own assessment and provide feedback. Such feedback from stakeholders' assessment has been excellent. For example, the Annual Performance Report (2009/2010) reports that in a letter signed by the Executive Secretary of the Foundation in 2010, the African Capacity Building Foundation (ACBF) expressed their satisfaction with EEA and decision to showcase EEA/EEPRI as a success story to be featured during the ACBF 20th Anniversary celebration and to increase ACBF utilization of consultants within EEA/EEPRI's database.

Another feedback mentioned on this report and given to EEA is from the Think Tank Initiative Policy Community Survey. The policy community survey conducted in 2010 on 24 Think Tanks in 11 African Countries collected information from senior level staff in their organizations and active members of the national policy community who are engaged in developing or influencing national government social and economic policy. The respondents were from government, NGOs, the media, multilateral/bilateral organizations, private sector and from research/academia. The survey was based on three indicators, institutional capacity, output delivery and usefulness of the outputs and the result indicated that EEA

performed well and is one of the top Think Tanks in the continent in terms of these three indicators. For the institutional indicators, EEA performed well above the average of the 24 Think Tanks in 11 African and 5 East African countries in most of the indicators. The following 11 indicators listed in the table 3 below were used to measure the institutional capacity: clear communication, engagement with policy makers, partnership with other policy actors, focus in high priority issues, informed critique of public policy, knowledge of policy making process, quality of researchers, regional knowledge, research dissemination, transparency, value of in person events. For the 11 African countries category, EEA ranked above the average in 7 indicators whereas in the 5 East African countries' category, EEA performed above the average in 9 indicators (including partnership with other policy actors, focus in high priority issues, informed critique of public policy, quality of researchers and research dissemination). The indicators that EEA underperformed in are engagement with policy makers, regional knowledge, transparency and value of in person events. EEA's comparative low score for engagement with policy makers seems to confirm the idea that the space for think tanks to engage in policy making is limited.

Table 3. Result of Policy Community Survey: Institutional Indicators

Institutional indicators	% of respondents selecting very good and Excellent (4+5)#		
	11 country Average	East Africa	EEA
Clear communication	40	40	53
Engagement with policy makers	39	40	33
Partnership with other policy actors	34	33	39
Focus in high priority issues	45	45	53
Informed critique of public policy	40	39	61
Knowledge of policy making process	47	46	47
Quality of researchers	53	47	55
Regional knowledge	42	41	39
Research dissemination	38	37	50
Transparency	39	35	36
Value of in-person events	35	29	31

Source: EEA Annual Performance Report (2009/2010)

In the area of output delivery and usefulness of output rating, EEA performed above the averages of 11 African Countries and 5 East African Countries in all of the 12 indicators used for these ratings as illustrated in table 4 and table 5.

Table 4. Output Rating Indicator

Output rating indicators	% of respondents selecting very good and Excellent (4+5)#		
	11 country Average	East Africa	EEA
Accuracy	46	44	61
Availability	35	34	50
Clarity	44	41	58
Objectivity	48	45	50
Quality of recommendations	46	41	53
Relevance	41	37	48
Timeliness	37	35	44

Source: EEA Annual Performance Report (2009/2010)

Table 5. Usefulness of Outputs

Usefulness of outputs	% of respondents selecting very good and Excellent (4+5)#		
	11 country Average	East Africa	EEA
Books	30	19	38
Journal articles	30	26	52
Newsletters	24	25	25
Reports	43	39	61
Unpublished website content	21	20	39

Source: EEA Annual Performance Report (2009/2010)

The overall rating results (table 6 below) of the survey emphasized EEA's performance and contribution to the policy making process in Ethiopia. EEA scored 61% on the overall performance indicator whereas the 11- African countries' and 5-East African countries' averages ranked 41% and 39% respectively. EEA also scored 64% on the overall impact indicators opposed to 42% and 44% respectively for the African countries and East-African Countries' averages. On the influencing indicator, EEA only scored 33% even though their performance was still higher than the 11 African countries (29%) and 5 East African Countries (26%). The researcher's interpretation for this low score on influencing is that this is

linked to the previously mentioned issue that the political context in Ethiopia not permitting to participate in internal stages of policy making such as policy formulation and implementation and low uptake by policy-makers. As a result, it can be deduced that think tanks are therefore not influencing policy making to their fullest potential.

Table 6. Overall Ratings

Overall ratings % of respondents selecting (4+5)				
	11 country Average	East Africa	EEA	
Overall performance	41	39	61	"Excellent' (4+5)
Influence	29	26	33	"Strongly Influence" (4+5)
Overall impact	42	44	64	"Positive" (4+5)

Source: EEA Annual Performance Report (2009/2010)

The EEA 2009/10 Annual Performance Report indicated that in addition to the Policy Community Survey, the Think Tank Initiative also conducted a different peer review of the research outputs of the 24 Think Tanks who submitted up to 4 research outputs for peer review produced in 2009. Each output was reviewed by a single peer reviewer chosen according to their expertise in the research topic and the context where the research was carried out. Reviewers provided their feedback using a form especially designed for this purpose. The performance report indicated that the score from this exercise showed that EEA is on the right direction in terms of methodology, relevance, timeliness, quality of its research however, did not provide the actual scores. When cross-checking the result for relevance and timeliness under the peer review with that of relevance and timeliness under the output rating indicator which scored 48% and 44% respectively, it can be said that there is still a lot of room for improvement.

The 2017 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report generated by the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP) of the Lauder Institute at the University of Pennsylvania ranked EEA as 16th from the top think tanks in Sub-Saharan Africa, following EDRI which ranked 10th from the same category.

FSS also recognizes policy influence is a difficult work as a single policy needs to be viewed from different perspectives and needs to be all rounded. A policy formulation is conducted in a complex process and based on research, comments, feedback, studies from all directions and perspectives. Normally, policies are considered at a small perspective however, the reality is that there are a multitude of factors that could both advantage and disadvantage a single policy at the same time. There are proponents lobbying for conflicting positions on the same policy. So there needs to be the right balance and trade-off to achieve the right policy. Also, policy actors may not accept a given research result or policy brief presented by a think tank because factors such as election promises, external pressure and party ideology influences. These reasons make linear attribution of policy influence to any single think tank very difficult. According to FSS, policy making itself is a long process where different actors participate and make their contribution. Under these complex processes, the key informant affirms that it is difficult for FSS to take attribution for a certain policy change.

Nevertheless, FSS believe the organization is achieving the objective of influencing policy and suggest there are proxy-indicators they use, mostly in quantitative metrics as follows:

1. The number and type of publications produced per annum. FSS believe that scientifically designed research methodology enable to make the publication a ready-made solution for policy challenges. To date, FSS has published a large number of publication including 34 policy briefs, 11 discussion papers, 39 consultation papers, 9 research reports, 7 proceedings, 13 monographs, 21 books, 3 documentaries and 91 periodicals which includes 16 publications under Africa Review of Books.
2. The number and type of public event/policy dialogue forums organized. FSS has organized a number of public policy dialogue such seven dialogues under poverty dialogue forum, eight dialogues under environmental policy dialogue, seven dialogues under gender policy, two phases of Inter-Generational Transfer of Knowledge, five public lecture series under the theme good governance and democracy in Africa, twelve public lecture series under the theme culture and development, six dialogues under the theme the quality of higher education in Ethiopia, five

dialogues under the theme climate change, environmental protection and sustainable development in Ethiopia, eleven dialogues under urban public service delivery in Addis Ababa, eight dialogues on youth and development in Ethiopia, six dialogues on poverty and migration in Ethiopia, seven dialogues on Ethiopian development challenges and prospects, and conferences, workshops and other public events.

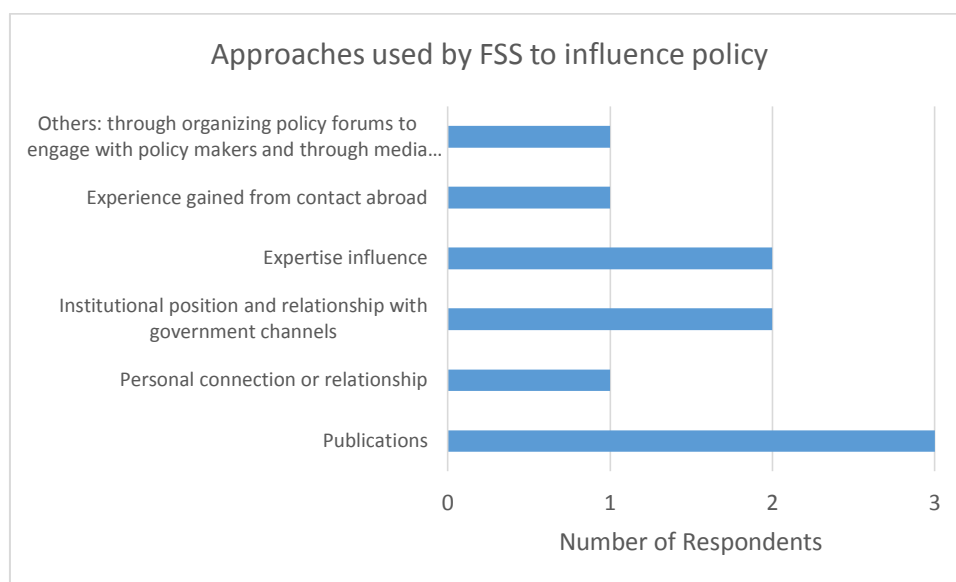
3. Participation in the media which reflect the credibility of FSS research outputs. FSS has a weekly media program on FM. In addition, the media is invited in all FSS events.
4. The qualification and experience of staff, funding strength and uptakes of outputs in international journals.

FSS also considers other non-quantitative proxy-indicators such as being invited to provide expert inputs in hearing and conferences.

Despite the existence of a rich amount research outputs in terms of quantitative metrics which indirectly gives an indication of FSS' contribution to the policy making process, FSS was not able to provide concrete examples that could illustrate some of the policy influence they achieved, given the iterative nature of policy making in developing countries such as Ethiopia as well as complexity of the policy environment. As a result, in the absence of these examples, the researcher was not able to generate a graph showcasing the approach used for specific successful policy influencing examples. Therefore, a graph showing approaches FSS would normally use was generated. This was also used to compare approaches used by the two think tanks.

Figure 5 below shows the various approaches of policy influence that FSS use. Publications feature as the main approach that are used in influencing policy making with all 3 respondents confirming this (30%). Then come expertise influence and institutional position and relationship with government channels with both having a response rate of 2 out of 3 (20%). Lastly, influence that comes from experience abroad and organising policy forums are the least used methods by FSS (10%).

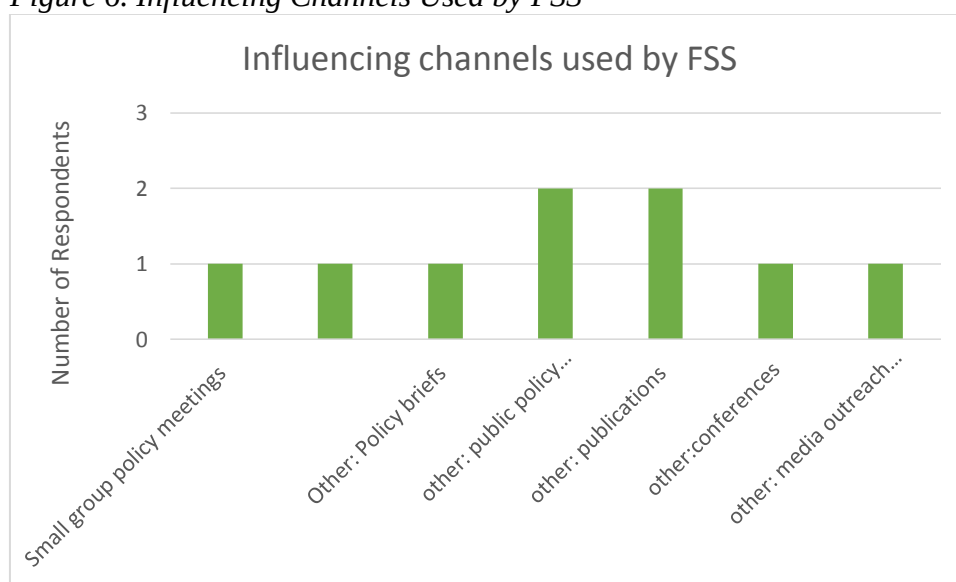
Figure 5. Approaches Used by FSS to Influence Policy



Source: *Researcher's own data (April 2018)*

Regarding policy influencing channels FSS would normally use, figure 6 below shows that the publications and public policy workshop are in the lead for influencing channels used by FSS with 2 Respondents (22% each). The rest of the influencing channels are equally rated and are the least used influencing channels.

Figure 6. Influencing Channels Used by FSS



Source: *Researcher's own data (April 2018)*

Ensuring visibility

To ensure that the organization's visibility and profile is maintained, EEA prepares a number of meetings, workshops and media profile whereby it publicizes and promotes their objectives, activities and program. To quote a few of these promotional activities reported in their 2009/2010 Annual Performance Report:

1. The president of EEA, EEPRI Director and Head of EEA Secretariat gave an hour and 10 minutes interview to Sheger Radio Station (102.10 FM Radio Station) on EEA development and contribution. The program was transmitted twice.
2. The 8th International Conference on the Ethiopian Economy that was held from June 24-26, 2010 at EEA conference Center received good coverage by ETV and other newspapers. Before the opening of the conference press release and interview were provided to news agencies;
3. Two staff of EEA provided periodic (on Saturday mornings) live radio interviews for Sheger Radio Station (102.10 FM Radio Station) on various economic issues.
4. EEA staff have given interviews to various News Agencies including VOA, Bloomberg news, Sheger FM, business magazine and ETV on different issues.

The 2013/14 Annual Performance report also presented the following media engagement:

1. The Trade and Industry Division head gave an interview to ETV and Radio regarding the Manufacturing sector performance in Ethiopia.
2. EEA Secretariat Head gave an interview to SHEGER 102.1 Radio about the Eleventh International Conference on the Ethiopian Economy.
3. One staff gave an interview to Debub Radio and TV about the fourth Annual Regional Conference on SNNPRS Economic Development on March 28, 2014.

FSS on the other hand, are ensuring their visibility through various mechanisms such as social media presence on Facebook and You Tube, weekly media broadcasting, through their signature and extensive policy dialogue forums as well as dissemination of research through various types of publications.

Although both organizations are using different publicizing mechanisms, they are similar in the fact that both are endeavoring to maintain their visibility and raise their profiles.

Evolution of the organization

Although there was some indication that the Charities and Societies Proclamation did not impact EEA's capacity to influence policy and that the proclamation's impact related to hindering the day to day operations of EEA through the various restrictions; the data gathered from questionnaires also pointed that in the pre-charities proclamation period EEA was able to involve in advocacy activities, opening the platform for policy discussion. Also, in the pre-charities proclamation period, there was more room and channels to translate the research message through different mechanisms like more researchable topics covered, many workshops including thematic ones were organized on top of advocacy meetings, for instance, Vision 2020 which was a public dialogue forum. In the pre-charities and Societies Proclamation, the organization had smooth working environment, unlimited research domain and no restriction to mobilize research resource. During the post-charities period, EEA have limited research activities due to the resident charity registration which they considered as the best fitting type given the various aspect of the Charities and Societies Proclamation. In the post-charities period many activities are pending against the objectives of EEA due to the rule and regulation of the proclamation, red tape of government system and the conflict of interest problem that the merger of the regulatory body and the license renewal organization created to manage the sector. Finally, in the post charities and societies proclamation, EEA's evolution in terms of its contribution to policy influence is good as evidenced by its various activities but the organization faces limited research funding, and restrictions in budgetary allocation of available resources.

In terms of the evolution of the organization and the Ethiopian Civil Society history, FSS consider the CSA proclamation of 2009 as a landmark. According to FSS, in the period preceding the 2009 CSA proclamation, a significant contribution is seen from civil society, including from FSS. Government officials were willing to attend public debates and participate. They contributed to good policies requiring changes on institutional frameworks. The period was also marked by the availability of more funding than what is currently available

and more research and public dialogue projects. According to FSS, this period was referred to as the golden years, characterized by high participation of responsible government bodies and no severe budget constraints.

The space for debate and discussion then narrowed when the CSA proclamation was enforced which affected policy change. According to a key informant, the space for think tanks was reduced due to political motivation. The key informant said: ‘Policy makers consider adopting the research results to equivalent as losing’. Post-charities proclamation period is restrictive in terms of enabling and operating environment and is characterized with uncertainty, which brings more threats to existence financially as think tanks faced significant budget limitation to sponsor policy researches.

The work of think tanks was seen in suspicion to the extent that FSS was requested to change its mandate. The proclamation only allows Ethiopian charities to work on human rights and governance areas. These charities are required to raise 90% of their funds from local sources such as membership and fund raisers and only 10% from external sources. The difficulty comes from the fact that think tanks by their nature work on advocacy rather than purely service delivery. Also, the 70 and 30% rule stipulates that 70% of the budget be spent on program expenditure whereas only 30% should be allocated for administrative costs. This only applies to service delivery organizations which produce tangible hardware such as a given number of children that are vaccinated or a given number of mothers that are helped to use contraception as opposed to think tanks who are engaged in the production of software in the form of research, knowledge and evidence and do not have tangible beneficiaries.

Due to such complications, FSS encountered problems on renewing its operating license for a short period of time. Also, the Charities and Societies Agency does not allow activities to continue without a tripartite project agreement signed between the think tank, government counterpart such as a sector ministry and the regional MoFEC. This type of arrangement has no problem with purely service delivery organizations. However, this arrangement is impossible for think tanks, particularly for policy evaluation or policy review type of work as government counterpart will not be willing to sign this agreement as they

don't consider this type of work as being the think tanks' mandate unless they come forward with it. The data indicate that the CSA proclamation has not taken into consideration the very nature and way that think tanks work.

Think tanks have lobbied for the change of regulations which were not appropriate for regulating think tanks, but without success. Therefore, the CSA proclamation has presented an all rounded challenge including the direct impact such as the narrowing of area of operation - for example working on corruption which would lead to political ramifications – and also the 70-30 directive. Some of the indirect impact that the proclamation brought was to highly affect think tanks' contribution to policy influence by creating uncertainty amongst donors which feared clashing with government through their support to independent think tanks and as a result reduced their financial assistance. Other reasons for dwindling resources and support to development include: the global financial crisis, attention diverted to Arab uprising, influx of migrants and conservative policy.

When looking at the evolution of FSS, particularly in terms of the impact of the Charities and Societies proclamation on staff, there is no significant trend identified by the study as FSS is a membership based organization and there is no expertise in-house. When certain issues or research topics are identified, the expertise is brought from the membership base and contracted to carry out the work. The researcher is brought on board and the research aspects such as the methodology are taken forward with his participation. FSS have always operated with a skeleton staff and currently have 15 staff of which only 5 are researchers.

Role of partnership and collaboration

EEA's collaboration with various counterparts such as research institutes, universities, government ministries, bilateral agencies, multilateral organizations and philanthropic agencies has contributed to the policy formulation process. Partnership with government organizations takes the major lead to influence policy and is a better channel to convey the policy message. Due to partnership with government, there is some change seen in government policy document such as Growth and Transformation Plan I (GTP I). EEA's approach is that as research evidence gets through to as many audiences and stakeholders as possible through partnership and collaboration, its credibility and impact would be maxim-

ized, keeping in mind that the impact of a given research recommendation might materialize either in the short, medium or long term.

Regarding the role of partnership and collaboration, FSS works with multilateral organizations who provide funding and for whom they conduct commissioned policy research; research institutes for joint policy research and research partnership, universities to carry out joint policy research and use of university staff for doing research, network association for membership and management, government ministries and bilateral agencies for research, participation in dialogues and other policy events, philanthropic organizations for research funding and partnership and NGOs to provide them with capacity building and training. As an NGO themselves, they collaborate and partner with NGOs in various levels and various activities. They also work with research councils for membership and the media to disseminate outputs. They extensively exploit the local media to make the research available to the public beyond the research community. None of the respondents confirmed that FSS work with consultancies and commercial companies.

While the collaboration and partnerships have allowed continuous engagement with partners and influencing them by providing evidence based findings, the data from FSS indicates that no empirical evidence on policy change can be drawn through the partnership and or collaboration with any of the organizations mentioned above. Although, it is difficult for FSS to pinpoint which policy or which change in which policy has been influenced, FSS still assume they have influenced policy this way or another way due to their active engagement in the policy making process.

In addition, FSS believe government commissioned researches have better chances of impacting policies in the Ethiopian context. According to a key informant, because government is averse to independent views, there is better chance of accepting research that government commission themselves or that is carried out jointly, which puts in question the objectivity of the research. Therefore, the data obtained reinforces the idea that policy research should be conducted by an independent organ free from government influence and rhetoric.

Comparative advantage of other organizations in influencing policy

From data gathered through a key informant interview from government established EDRI, it appears that in addition to a department which carries out research, they do have a dedicated Policy Analysis Department/Unit which prepares outputs ready made for policy application and different from the academic research type produced in their Research Department. The key informant indicated that the research department is criticized for not producing enough policy briefs however, the existence of the Policy Analysis Department compensates for this as the Policy Analysis Department provides the required policy documents. EDRI is not the only government affiliated research institute. There are other research institutes working closely with government such as Policy Research Center (PRC). The researchers in both of these institutes, easily influence policy as they share the same ideologies as policy-makers.

EEA and EDRI work jointly on research undertakings. For instance, they jointly organize the Annual International Conference on the Ethiopian Economy. They also organize joint short term trainings and capacity building. EEA participate in workshops organized by EDRI and provide comments. EEA does not have a direct access to the policy analysis department in EDRI, because EEA is autonomous and independent. However, their joint working and collaboration has led to influencing policy decision making because EDRI is a government owned think tank whose ideas find easy access to policy influence.

The comparative advantage identified for EDRI through this study is that EDRI, as a government affiliated organization, is not required to work under the strict regulatory environment. Secondly, its capacity is much stronger both in terms of finance (10 million birr annually) and human resource. Their budget is allocated from government. Also, the data indicated that donors support them because of government influence and that their ideas rather than those of others are considered by policy makers because of being part of government and therefore seeing policy from government's overall policy direction builds up trust between the two entities. EEA's comparative advantage is that the organization is independent and therefore the research outputs will be credible.

For FSS, the gathered data indicates that Government owned, affiliated or controlled research institutes are those that easily influence policy making. Although FSS do not have any work relationships with government affiliated research institutes, they indicate that think tanks are different from them in terms of budget but also in terms of establishment, regulations that apply to each of them and independence.

4.2 Relevance of the Research Outputs of EEA and FSS

For core activities, EEA conducts an internal discussion to generate some ideas from researchers' own observations, or that of others' such as stakeholders, select ideas in a process whereby all of EEA's divisions participate, and contemporary, thematic, outstanding issues are identified. Researchers in the association brainstorm on current issues in the media. The current economic problems are taken into consideration based on a pre-assessment. Examples of such thematic contemporary issues are construction, agriculture etc. The way the various departments come up with the burning research topics is through observation, review of government policy direction, identifying binding issues in national development plan and identify areas where there is lack of knowledge. When an idea emerges, the department assesses availability of data and time constraints and prioritizes topics and selects topics of research to be carried in that given year, dedicates budget and expertise. EEA then sets the research agenda and calls for a project launching workshop to determine content whereby government members are involved. The selected research is then researched and published in the annual economic research report. An example is the publication of Energy in 2006 when the topic of energy was a burning issue due to gaps in the energy sector such as shortage in the provision of electricity. Other examples are research topics on industrialization, agriculture, transport and construction sector. Following completion of research EEA disseminates publications to different organizations like institutional members, research institutions and civil society organizations. Research topics also emerge from requests from stakeholders which EEA receive.

Other types of research outputs such as working papers are also produced in EEA. These are also part of core programs but are not of regular nature. Topics for these, usually on areas such as education, trade and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), are solely identified by

the researchers themselves and are completed at their discretion over a prolonged period of time. EEA then screens the autonomous work on the papers and calls a workshop to engage stakeholder institutions at the mid-term and final report stage and take comments and feedback on the research before it is published.

A third area of research topic identification is through call for proposals issued by different grant makers. The ideas are generated by the grant makers and think tanks are requested to compete. A management meeting is called to discuss the various aspects of this call for proposals including division of labor of the different divisions such as Trade and Industry Division, Agricultural Division, Macro Division, Poverty and Human Resource Division.

A few examples given by EEA of research topics that were considered of relevant nature are their work on:

1. Industrial policy
2. Regional tax potential study carried out for SNNPR
3. Fifth National Health Account
4. Community based Health Insurance
5. Health Extension Program

For FSS, policy issues or problems originate from their 5 years strategic plan which provides guidance and general focus and duration of the themes. In addition, FSS members and management bring in policy issues through brainstorming. These ideas will be discussed and prioritized by FSS management. The research topics could be taken from responses from the participants of forums, validation and dissemination workshops and readers of publications and other means. Then a 3-year plan will be drawn from this discussion and prioritization to set FSS' own policy agenda will be undertaken. Because FSS are donor-dependent, they can't do everything so they try to find donors. They also look for call for papers even though these research work are not in the 3-year plan. They undertake periodic program meetings such as monthly discussions whereby they review challenges and progress. FSS also looks at gaps in government policies when topics are selected for instance in health, natural resource, investment or labor migration. These are then taken to

HoPR, Social Affairs but these are not taken on board as policy makers perceive acknowledging these research results as being in the position of losing. Research topics also originate from responses from participants of forums, validation and dissemination workshops and readers of publications. Also, FSS tries to align its research to government policy priorities. When priorities for policy research are set, one of the things considered is whether they are related or relevant to government priority areas. Therefore, reference will be made to GTP and other policy documents.

From a key informant's perspective in the National Planning Commission, think tanks' work on research topics are sometimes isolated and focus on a very small perspective that cannot be of macro-economic concern and as a result can't be brought to the national policy making level. Countering this criticism, FSS indicates that it is the sum of smalls that makes a big topic. From their end FSS determine the relevance of a given research problem by evaluating it based on the extent of the problem and its impact and its contribution to the development of the country.

A few examples of FSS work which they considered relevant are the following:

1. A policy research and dialogues on poverty in Ethiopia – that put a significant contribution on the preparation of the PRSP document in 2001-2002;
2. Research on food security;
3. Inclusive and participatory development;
4. Labor migration
5. Policy research in gender
6. Policy research in the environment

FSS argue that their media citations reflect that the research and dialogue outputs are relevant to objective realities and the policy ideas and that recommendations are sound and viable to be considered as inputs in the formulation or adjustment of policies and strategies of the government.

4.3 Main Challenges and Opportunities for EEA and FSS in Influencing Policy

4.3.1 Main Challenges Faced by EEA and FSS

Several challenges encountered by EEA act as barriers to EEA's contribution to the policy making process and reduce EEA's role in policy influence.

One of the major challenge of EEA in influencing policy is the regulatory framework and the associated license renewal issue. According to EEA, the regulatory framework is extremely suffocating. There is misunderstanding and ignorance on the part of the regulatory organization on what think tanks do and how they do it. EEA is not an NGO that has tangible outputs such as distributing wheat flour or bed nets to individuals. EEA like other think tanks is an organization that produces knowledge. So the regulatory framework has not given sufficient consideration for these kinds of services. Therefore, the regulatory framework as well as various directives including the 70 and 30% directive are inappropriate for regulating think tanks. EEA had its license revoked for 2 years. The key informant indicated that had it not been for the relentless effort of policy makers or officials, their license wouldn't have been renewed and EEA wouldn't have been in existence today. Research needs a stable environment and dedicated staff. The lack of stable environment, dedicated staff and budget in EEA during the license renewal suspension period brought an unstable environment as well as staff turnover over the last 6 years, budget has decreased, staff morale has been affected. The prolonged license renewal process has had many lost opportunities as additional programs, research and researchers' job security were endangered. Only core activities were carried out during the suspension time so the knowledge generation aspect was weakened as independent research analysis, policy discussion forums and funding decreased.

The other challenge is the declining funding issue. Financing research is expensive for think tanks because knowledge generation process needs a lot of resources for surveys, data generation and analysis. Support that is going to research is diminishing from development partners. EEA have had several partnerships with several development partners - bilateral as well as multilateral. However, funding is currently reducing so this has created a lot of problems for EEA so their financial resources and human capacity have disintegrated and

eroded. This reduced support from development partners is a big challenge because EEA is not a consulting firm. EEA cannot raise funds from competition in the consultancy domain as the regulation does not allow them. A number of their products have a public good character, for instance an economic report on the Ethiopian environment, and is useful for policy makers, for academia, for everybody. But the question of who is financing this is becoming an issue. By awarding their research to international consultancies and think tanks, donors are not building sustainable local capacity.

For donors, it is less expensive to support research financially than to fund development. In addition, research benefits development through policy changes and building the evidence base. However, development partners are choosing to provide less and less support to think tanks such as EEA. Support from development partners may be diminishing for a number of reasons including, reduced appetite, interest and motivation. Another potential reason for the declining financial support could be the fact that donors are accountable to and have to answer to their taxpayer community through demonstration of results through the use of result measurement tools such as logical frameworks. Although, research can have immediate, intermediate and long run impact on policy influence, it has no linear and direct path to policy influence. So, outright result can be hard to demonstrate for think tanks and can only be quantified as output but not in terms of outcome and impact.

Other challenges cited were:

1. The lack of political space is also indicated as a challenge in terms of closed policy from government's side to collaborate with others, little appetite for evidence and low enthusiasm. Also, researchers find it difficult to approach some policy makers.
2. Government capacity to uptake the research outputs from Think Tanks is also low.

Through the data collection, the study has discovered the following challenges that FSS are facing. FSS find the Charities and Societies legislation and the 30-70 directive a challenge in influencing policy. The legislation is based on income generation constraint. The 30-70 directive prohibits independent think tanks to work on areas such as governance, democracy and human rights. The legislation stipulates that because funds are raised from outside sources such as international donors, these think tanks cannot work on these domestic is-

sues. The legal environment is unfriendly for the workings of think tanks. The other restrictive aspect of the regulation is that it stipulates that think tanks should sign a project agreement with sector ministries. However, this is not desirable as the research institution signing an agreement with government counterparts will compromise the research institute's independence. The government counterpart which signed the agreement will want to micromanage all aspect of the research including the methodology as they will want to control the process and outcome of the research results. This will put think tanks' credibility at stake. Therefore, according to the key informant, independence has a great value. The license renewal aspect is also not smooth. Because of case officers' turnover in the Charities and Societies Agency, it is not always easy to get the license renewed in a smooth process. For example, case officers don't always understand the way think tanks work. To illustrate, case officers consider research costs such as travel costs as administrative costs and indicate that these should not exceed 30% when these costs should have been considered as program costs. The outputs of the research such as the publications only are considered as program costs when in reality both types of costs should have been considered as program costs and included under 70%. These misunderstandings inhibit the registration process and have also led the Charities and Societies Agency to request that FSS re-organize their mandate.

Another challenge the research identified for FSS is the lack of adequate funding to conduct research on as many policy topics as desired. Dependence on foreign funds due to the 70-30 directive and lack of culture to sponsor research has led to financial resource limitation. This has created an uncertainty of the funding landscape. The reason for the declining funds as observed by the key informants are the economic downturn and crisis that marked the last 10 years, the shift of interest from donors to migration issues in Arab countries and the rapid growth and economic development of Ethiopia leading them to look to other countries to support.

The lack of cooperation from government organizations who are also not receptive is another challenge. There is limited or lack of participation of policy makers on public dialogue forums and policy discussions. Policy briefs are also prepared and distributed to poli-

cy makers but they don't take the research findings into account during policy formulation. Gaps in policies are seen when topics are selected. There is no inclusiveness and participatory process on policy consultation which is due to legitimacy questions from government's side i.e. that think tanks are not legitimate to input to policy formulation. There is limited democratic space for transparent and open dialogue and limited appetite for independent policy views and ideas.

The final constraint identified is the problem that think tanks have in terms of being confined to themselves. Think tanks do not go door to door to promote their workshops.

4.3.2 Opportunities Presented to EEA and FSS

EEA perceive that the environment is changing and there is some optimism with the recent political development in the country namely the recent political unrest and protest which led to the government change which seems to have given a very early promise in the government's willingness to open up the democratic space.

The other opportunity is, as the Ethiopian economy grows in size and complexity, demand for evidence-based policy formulation becomes more essential. As such, applied policy research becomes more crucial as it generates evidence for the formulation and implementation of the policies needed to accompany a dynamic and growing economy. EEA is therefore hoping to make a policy impact through donors, development partners, CSO organizations, NGOs and Private sector by empowering evidence based discussion.

On working collaboratively, EEA becomes at the same time a competitor or a collaborator with government affiliated research institute such as EDRI, depending on the circumstances. When EEA is a collaborator, it has a number of benefits such as access to policy makers. When it is a competitor, it participates in the global knowledge which brings synergy.

Finally, research outputs constitute materials for students as there is no exhaustive reference at one place.

In terms of opportunities for FSS, not many are foreseen but the following are identified: As the key informant sees it, the current movement seems promising. There is an indication that government is planning to re-visit the CSO law as part of the plan to strengthen CSO

and media engagement. This will lead to the democratization process as CSOs represent the voice of people.

There are some limited opportunity seen in terms of funds as well as credibility and legitimacy of FSS to strive for policy influence through its high quality research and policy dialogue forums and media outreach program.

4.4 Discussion of Emerging Issues between FSS and EEA

The weaknesses and strength of each organization are then discussed in detail and the relevance for think tanks will be explained.

In terms of the role of the organizations, the objectives that both organizations have set for themselves are broadly similar. Through activities that achieve these objectives, they aim to conduct policy research whether economic or social and widen the evidence base through a large number of empirical and rigorous research that they provide. They also provide the platform for different views and perspectives to be heard and debated. There is therefore similarity in their roles in that they produce socio-economic analysis and knowledge and disseminate it widely. In terms of capacity building and training, both organizations consider training as an important and crucial element of human capital development whether it is that of government or civil society organizations. According to the literature, the two main functions of think tanks are to perform research and disseminate the findings through publications, conferences and public dialogues, and to conduct capacity building support and training. Both of these activities will need to be done on an independent basis, which both EEA and FSS are doing through the wide range of activities they are offering. It can therefore be said that EEA and FSS are achieving their role of providing evidence and knowledge to be used in policy making. They are providing information for policy makers to consider when making policy decisions. They are also acting as intermediaries between the public and government by ensuring the exchange of ideas and information between various policy actors, thereby contributing to the democratization process in their current capacities. However, the relatively limited uptake by policy makers indicates the limited democratization process, nevertheless EEA and FSS' attempt to engage in policy research

and dissemination work, despite the political system, is an encouraging trend which all think tanks should strive to do.

EEA and FSS both strive to reach policy makers, albeit using varied communication mechanisms and tools. EEA also don't use social media for disseminating research result unlike FSS. They both spread policy research results using different channels and mechanisms to different and multiple audiences to ensure access to policy is maximized. Their audiences and research outputs are more or less similar. FSS's strength in terms of putting in place a communication strategy and a dedicated communication expert is identified in the study whereas EEA don't have similar structure due to budget constraints. The literature asserts that think tanks will need to think about communication strategically in order to become effective in communicating their research results, not just focusing on research alone.

Another interesting finding of the study is that as indicated by a key informant in EDRI; EDRI staff and the Executive Director are members of EEA. EEA's membership offers numerous membership benefits such as training, culture, knowledge, research skills, increased research practice, research methodology, knowledge on economic subject matter, teaching of tools such as econometrics, recommendation letters written to members, library usage. As a result, EEA possesses a wide membership base as opposed to FSS which only has 50 members. This constitutes a testimony of EEA's expertise in the field of economic and social research as well as its visibility. Think tanks will therefore need to actively promote their organizations in order to widen their membership base and raise their profiles. This will also lead them to increasing their financial resources through membership fees.

In terms of scope of work, both organizations work on socio-economic issues but are different in terms of engagement: EEA engages at the Federal level as well as in regions and therefore has a wider reach than FSS which only has presence at the Federal level. This will ensure access to a variety of stakeholders including policy makers at different levels. Think tanks should therefore ensure that they widen their presence throughout the country in order to enlarge their reach to policy makers.

Concerning stages of policy making, both organizations have indicated that they both contribute to the agenda setting and evaluation stages through dissemination of their research

findings in different forms. However, there is limited space to make contributions to the more internal stages of policy making process due to the closed political system.

EEA like FSS use indirect indicators to measure their policy influence and contribution in the policy making process. Also, the approach used in both cases to reach to policy makers is the use of publications. However, they vary in the use of the channels. The channel EEA uses is internal report and internal conference while FSS uses publication and public policy workshops. This can be interpreted as EEA gaining access internally, through their collaboration with government counterparts while FSS is striving to convey policy messages externally.

Regarding collaborative working, EEA believes that partnership and collaboration maximize credibility and impact of research results whereas FSS suggest that empirical evidence that policy change is achieved through partnership and or collaboration cannot be presented. This boils down to the fact that measuring policy is a difficult task and the actual achievements in the policy making process cannot be demonstrated empirically. The other distinction that can be made with regard to collaborative working is that EEA seems to have the upper hand in that it works with specific government counterparts such as MoFEC, MoT, MoI, NPC whereas FSS do not have any partnerships with government counterparts. Although this will limit possibilities of access in influencing policy makers this is explained by FSS as due to complications of the current CSO legislation which could potentially compromise their independence. EEA on the other hand strive to juggle closely working with policy makers while maintaining their independence, which provides better access to policy influence. EEA also believes research institute need to maintain their independence so that they don't face any pressure of being coerced into having identical views with that of policy makers'. They suggest, it is important and good to have different thinking and the culture of nurturing the exchange of these views. This will present different angles, perspectives, diversity of ideas and enrich knowledge. This may not necessarily influence policy makers instantly but will gradually lead to improvement of the policy over time. At the same time, EEA also think that there needs to be mutual interaction for meaningful participation in the policy process which is why close working is required while

maintaining independence. For instance, this is demonstrated by the 15th International conference on the Ethiopian Economy co-hosted by EDRI which high government officials officially opened and attended.

Also, the study has brought to light that government affiliated research institutes such as EDRI have a better chance of influencing policy due to sharing the same ideology. EEA have exploited collaborative working with EDRI which contributes to establishing trust between the two organizations and getting a better access for evidence and knowledge to reach to policy makers, therefore think tanks should learn from this process, bearing in mind that think tanks should remain independent.

Regarding relevance of policy topics, policy problems are identified on the basis of internal discussions for both EEA and FSS through brainstorming, consideration of stakeholder's responses as well as through observation of current problems. Validation and dissemination workshops as well as project launching workshops are also used to ensure that policy problems are relevant and include the right content. The research topics that were studied by EEA and FSS were mostly relevant as they related to current issues such as growth, agriculture, health, education. Both think tanks generally try to look at government policies and strategies as well as gaps and try to align their policy topics to relevant and current problems. However, the study uncovered that EEA FSS deviate from specific research activities on its three year strategic plan, depending on the availability of funds but also subject that the topics identified on the call for proposals fit the strategic plan. There is also a lot of room for EEA to improve on its relevance and timeliness of research as informed by the Think Tank Initiative Community Survey. The NPC indicates that they adopt nationally representative research on condition that these meet certain criteria, however, they criticized the gap of most independent researches which are carried out based on availability of fund, not based on government plans and strategies and therefore research produced will have the problem of not being at the macroeconomic standard. The learning on this is that think tanks need to balance their approach in trying to align their research problems to government plans but also in trying to make their own judgment in identifying the relevant topic, which is where their independence lies.

In terms of challenge, both organizations have identified that the civil society regulatory framework and its various directives are the most challenging for them both. The findings from both organizations show that this directive is causing a lot of challenges and difficulty for their existence and that the directives are not appropriate for think tanks and policy research institutes. They both have faced different degrees of license renewal issues which they resolved through the assistance of high government officials. The regulatory framework has especially been problematic for EEA which was unable to get its license renewed for 2 years. As a result, uncertainty, staff demoralization and turn over are a constant trait since 2012. The Ethiopian economy needs a lot of knowledge due to the size of the country, its economic activities, dimensions and depth. There are a lot of unseen economic interactions, linkages and trade-offs which need to be studied. Currently in particular, more knowledge is needed as the country transforms and transits from poverty. Therefore, to promote knowledge, intensive intervention is required. Research will then become an industry and will generate a body of knowledge. However, the current regulation is not fostering this kind of environment. The evolution of think tanks is a downward trajectory in terms of restrictive and suffocating environment which directly impacts their operation and existence and indirectly affects their policy influence capacity. FSS are making every effort to lobby for the change of the regulations for think tanks. This path should also be followed by other think tanks as constant lobbying over time by a large number of research institutes might bear fruit.

The diminishing financial resource and lack of adequate funding is also a challenge EEA and FSS share. Donor's lack of interest to provide funding to these organization and shift of attention to other global issues has meant that these organizations have faced a major bottleneck with regard to securing funding which will impact their activities and therefore contribution in the policy making process. Think tanks should therefore come up with innovative and better ideas to secure funding. This could be through membership fees or other fundraising activities.

The limited democratic space is also another challenge that both these organizations indicate is a key setback to the meaningful working of think tanks. These translate into lack of

government cooperation and participation, low appetite for evidence and the issue of lack of receptiveness, limited open dialogue, lack of appetite for independent policy perspective and lack of inclusiveness and participatory process on policy consultation due to questioning the legitimacy of think tanks.

Another challenge identified by FSS is the limited effort exerted by think tanks. The need for perseverance from think tanks is important to FSS, particularly in motivating as much government offices as possible to attend policy dialogue forums and get their attention. As supported by the literature review, when the political context of a country does not necessarily support the flourishing of independent research institutes and generation of a different set of ideas, the best strategy for research institutes is to keep carrying out research outputs and make them available to policy makers. Over time, policy makers will make use of this wealth of knowledge and evidence. Therefore, perseverance will gradually enable a political context that is difficult and hostile to independent research institutes to gradually change.

Both organizations see very little opportunities except for an early promise for a little opening in the democratic space following the recent change in government. This is a welcome opportunity for both research institutes. Although the actual outcome of this situation remains to be seen, think tanks will need to make every effort to push for a change in the democratic space.

In addition, EEA foresees that there will be further demand for evidence-based policy formulation in the future for further development and growth in the country, which they also consider as a small opportunity. Another small opportunity for EEA is strengthened collaborative working. Think tanks should exploit both of these opportunities - particularly in light of the democratic space opening - to make the most contribution towards policy making process.

Chapter Five

5. Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Summary of Findings

1. EEA works closely with government partners while maintaining their independence, whereas FSS are not able to sign tri-partite agreements as they wouldn't want to compromise their independence which is an important aspect of being a think tank.
2. The reach or scope of influence is wider for EEA due to its presence in the region, which will ensure that policy advice reaches diverse and larger number of stakeholders.
3. Both EEA and FSS are encountering budget constraints.
EEA does not have a communication strategy and a dedicated communication expert due to budget constraints unlike FSS. Communicating research findings and in a strategic manner is important.
4. The current regulatory framework has led both research institutes to face, problems renewing their licenses. The extended period of time the license renewal problem has been going on for EEA has meant that it has weakened and made it precarious. Staff spirit has also died.
5. Research topic identification for independent research in our country's context is based on availability of funding rather than sticking to long term plans and strategies.
6. Engagement with policy makers is low for think tanks due to closed democratic space. Although EEA has some level of engagement with policy makers, this is still low as informed by the Think Tank Initiative Policy Community Survey. EEA's policy influence seems to be better than FSS' as demonstrated by the number of successful policy influence example and partnership with government counterpart. However, EEA's influence is still found to be relatively low according to the Think Tank Initiative Policy Community Survey, particularly compared to other African countries.

7. Research institutes are not providing policy influence to their fullest even though they are conducting a number of research activities and policy dialogues. There is also a lot of room to improve on relevance and timeliness of research outputs.
8. EEA and FSS are maintaining their visibility and profiles through various public dialogue and discussion forums as well as through media program. This is a crucial aspect of promoting the research findings in the policy making process.
9. EEA in comparison to FSS is a better performing research institute. The supporting ideas are its wider membership base, wider reach of policy makers in terms of regional presence, joint working with both government counterparts and other stakeholders

5.2 Conclusions

The study's aim was to assess the role, evolution and challenges of two think tanks, EEA and FSS, which shared a common denominator of being independent and with similar objectives of availing research findings, result and recommendation for policy formulation. They also had the objective of building the capacity and skills of policy actors. The study assessed whether these organizations had similar roles and paths in terms of achievement, evolution, constraints faced and opportunities presented. The study shows that these organizations broadly have similar roles and paths due to both being independent think tanks. Although it is not easy to determine the extent of policy influence that policy research institutes such as EEA and FSS have achieved, it is undeniable that they have made significant contributions during their long-term engagement in the policy making process, first without any constraints in the pre-charities and societies proclamation period due to the existing knowledge gap at the time but also due to the relaxed legislation regulating civil society. However, the trend that emerged following the post-charities and societies proclamation is the narrowing of democratic space and scope of work unconducive environment and inappropriate regulations.

With regards to the comparative performance of EEA and FSS, there seems to be indirect recognition given by policy-makers to EEA which is by allowing them to work on various researches including the impact evaluation of public policies as well as to sit on several standing and technical committees managed by government. There are also several indirect

indicators such as EEA's membership base which includes government officials, the extent of reach through its regional presence, the collaborative working including with government partners which showcase the expertise EEA possesses as well as a certain degree of reliance on EEA by policy makers and a certain degree of implied trust.

Both EEA and FSS have to work hard to fill the existing gap in relevance of policy topics chosen. Working towards securing their funding would help them achieve the provision of policy-relevant advice.

The charities regulation places a burden on these think tanks particularly in light of inadequate funding. The currently suffocating regulatory environment will atrophy and threaten the existence of these organizations if appropriate measures to correct this are not taken. The evolution of both EEA and FSS has shown a downward trend in terms of reduced number of research outputs, staff turnover and low staff morale. Under these conditions, this would indirectly and in the long run affect their capacity to produce any research or knowledge and thereby inhibit them from providing any meaningful contribution to the policy making process. EEA survived in this extremely difficult regulatory framework due to its strategic importance and as it had the support of many policy makers and government officials, including the former Prime Minister. FSS also survived due to support from higher officials.

The struggle that think tanks such as EEA and FSS are exhibiting is a worrying trend as the final and long term implication would mean that policy discussion ceases being a necessity and may become a luxury in our country.

Despite the suffocating environment, the think tanks are still continuing to achieve their research activities to bridge the gap between knowledge and policy. However, there needs to be a more enabling environment for these think tanks to perform at their full potential.

The motivation of policy makers and uptake of policy recommendations needs to change and give way to an open democratic space. There seems to be some very recent indications that democratic space is opening which think tanks should exploit. This will foster strong

collaboration and partnership with all stakeholders working towards the same goal: informed policy decision making.

5.3 Recommendations

1. Perseverance of think tanks in carrying out their research studies and disseminating them to a wide audience will pay off over time. The produced research will accumulate and constitute a wealth of knowledge and evidence which policy makers will use in due time. Therefore, this strategy will gradually enable a difficult political context to change in the long run.
2. In the absence of direct result measurement tools to quantify outcome and impact, creating awareness of potential users of research, feedback review and follow-up is the way to go.
3. Basic freedom of research such as freedom of thinking, writing and publishing in all areas including human rights, governance and democracy will need to be respected. As a result, democratic space will open up, mistrust will be removed and collaboration and partnership will be established.
4. Also, the regulatory framework needs to be revised to give enough considerations to how think tanks work and how they should be regulated.
5. In order to ensure that the research topics think tanks select are policy relevant, they need to ensure that they have sufficient resources, through different fundraising mechanisms, to carry out the activities in their strategic plans.

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Appendices

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The intention of this questionnaire is to collect primary data regarding policy influence and the role that research institutes plays towards this. The data from the questionnaire will inform and provide the analysis of the thesis research ‘A comparative Analysis of Research Institutes on Influencing Policy-Making in Ethiopia: the case of Ethiopian Economics Association and Forum for Social Studies’ which is being carried out as partial requirement for an MA in Public Management and Policy.

The purpose of this research is to identify the role that research institutes play towards influencing policy in the Ethiopian context as well as to identify the barriers that inhibit policy influence.

The answers in this questionnaire will only be used for academic purpose and handled confidentially.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in filling the questionnaire.

Nadia Abdulwahab
Extension student
Masters in Public Management and Policy (MPMP)
February 2018

A. Respondent information

1. Sex Male ☐ Female ☐
2. Education level: Bachelor's Degree ☐ Post-graduate ☐
3. Position title: _____

4. Level of responsibility in the organization:

Researcher ☐ Middle level management ☐ Executive Management ☐
Other, please specify _____

5. Stay in the organization:

1 to 2 years ☐ 3 to 5 years ☐ Above 5 years ☐

B. Questions

1. What is the role that research institutes play on policy influence in Ethiopia?

2. What is the impact that the organization is expecting to make on policy decision making?

3. Does the organization consider policy influence as one of its objectives?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, then answer question no. 4 and 5.

4. How do you measure or evaluate this objective of influencing policy?

5. Is the organization achieving this objective of influencing policy?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, then answer question no. 6

If no, then answer question no. 7

6. What are the influencing approaches used by the organization?

- a. through publications
- b. through personal connection or relationship
- c. through institutional position and relationship with government channels
- d. through expertise influence
- e. through experience gained from contact from abroad

f. if other, please state and explain: _____

7. What are the constraints that are preventing the organization from influencing policy?

8. How are the different research activities, outputs and publications of the organization used in influencing policy decision making?

9. Who is the target audience for the output of the organization?

10. What specific examples can you give to illustrate policy influence by the organization?

11. Which approach enabled policy influence for these particular examples?

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| a. publications | ☐ |
| b. personal connection or relationship | ☐ |
| c. institutional position and relationship with government channels | ☐ |
| d. expertise influence | ☐ |
| e. experience gained from contact from abroad | ☐ |
| f. if other, please state and explain: | |

12. What were the influencing channels used for the above successful policy influencing examples?

a. Internal reports

☐

b. small group policy meetings

☐

c. Informal consultations with policy makers

☐

d. Internal conferences

☐

e. Appearances in national or western media

☐

f. other, please specify

13. Who commissioned the research?

14. Do you think government commissioned researches have better chances of impacting policies in the Ethiopian context?

15. What does the evolution of the organization look like in terms of its role in influencing policy (from the date of its establishment until recently) broken down as follows:?

Pre-charities and Societies proclamation

Post- Charities and Societies proclamation

Reasons for the change in the evolution of the organization, if any

16. Do you have any partnership or collaborations with the following organizations:

	Yes	No
a. Research institutes	☐	☐
b. Universities	☐	☐
c. Network associations	☐	☐
d. Government Ministries and Bilateral agencies	☐	☐
e. Philanthropic organizations	☐	☐
f. Multilateral organizations	☐	☐
g. Non-Governmental organizations	☐	☐
h. Consultancy and commercial companies	☐	☐
i. Research councils	☐	☐
j. the media	☐	☐
k. Any other?	☐	☐

17. If so, can you please state the organizations and explain the aim of the partnership or collaboration you have with each of the organizations?

a. Research institutes

b. Universities

c. Network associations

d. Government Ministries and Bilateral agencies

e. Philanthropic organizations

f. Multilateral organizations

g. Non-Governmental organizations

h. Consultancy and commercial companies

i. Research councils

j. the media

k. Any other?

18. Can you please explain if the partnership and collaboration has served for or led to policy influence?

19. How is your policy directed to government plans and strategies?

20. What citations of your research products either in the media, journals or other do you have?

21. What do you think these citations reflect?

22. Do you have any experience sharing on the achievement of policy influence or policy change with research institutes in country?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, please answer question no. 25.

23. Who are those research institutes?

24. What is the learning from the experience sharing on the achievement of policy influence?

25. Where do you get your policy issues or concerns or problems?

26. How do you determine these are relevant?

27. Can you please state examples of policy researches that were considered relevant and how these achieved policy influence?

28. What does your membership look like?

29. At which stage of the policy cycle do you participate and how?

Agenda setting (problem identification)

Policy formulation

Decision making

Implementation

Evaluation

30. What does the policy process in Ethiopia look like?

31. Is the environment conducive for policy influence?

32. What needs to change to make the environment conducive?

33. Do you work with EDRI?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If yes, please answer no. 37

34. How do you work with EDRI?

35. Do you think working with EDRI leads to impacting or influencing policy decision making?

36. What do you think their comparative advantage is?

37. What is their role on leading policy influence on directly commissioned research for government counterparts?

Do you think there are research institutes who are easily influencing policy making?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If yes, please answer questions 55 and 56.

38. Who are these organizations?

39. What do you think their comparative advantage is?

40. Which of the following obstacles are encountered for your particular organization on policy influence? Please elaborate on the factors that you choose.

a. Institutional factors in terms of enabling institutional structures

b. Cultural factors in terms of presence of a strong, vocal entrepreneurial class supporting think tanks as opposed to the public sector leading on research

c. Economic factors

d. Competitive policy environment

e. Political space and legal framework

f. Lack of appropriate policy influence approaches

g. Any other? _____

41. What opportunities in influencing policy are there in the Ethiopian Context?

42. Going forward, what are your recommendations in order for think tanks to be able to influence or impact policy in the Ethiopian context?

Interview guiding questions

The aim of this interview/focus group discussion is to obtain a better understanding on the role and obstacles of policy influencing in the Ethiopian context.

1. What is the size of your membership?
2. What is the role of seminars and conferences? (Do they bring together experts from various research institutes? If so, what is the outcome of this discussion? Do they culminate in policy drafting and recommendations? Is this forwarded to policy makers? Are they an end by themselves or a means to influence policy?
3. Are reports, papers from seminars and conferences written up and submitted to policy makers or your institute's policy chain, if you have one?
4. Do you have any media citations, parliamentary testimonies, distribution of publications?
5. How do you shape policy making process? (Do you believe your organization is contributing positively to policy influence and if so, how? Direct or indirect? What are the options for influencing for your organization? At what stages of policy cycle or policy process i.e. agenda setting, policy formulation, decision making, implementation do you attempt to influence policy or contribute the most?)
6. Have relationships and mechanisms with policy makers flourished in the past decade?
7. Have you had joint project with one or more research institutes?
8. Have they influenced policies?
9. Have you had any learning or experience sharing with research institutes with other countries?
10. What does research institutes collaboration with other policy institutes in other countries look like and what has it achieved?
11. What are the main challenges that your organization is facing in influencing policy?
12. How has your organization evolved in terms of participation and contribution to policy making process, namely, its policy influencing role over the years since its creation
13. What comparative advantage do you think other research institutes possess which is helping them to play a greater role in policy influencing
14. How has the Charities and Societies proclamation impacted your organization, particularly in the policy making process? Is Charities and Societies proclamation a constraint in influencing policy making?

15. (EEA) Has competition with EDRI enabled EEA to carry out better research and better policy influencing skills or has it inhibited your performance in the policy making process.
16. How are you selecting policy problems to ensure the policy advice is relevant and in line with government policy making/strategy?
17. How many invitation for research undertaking by government counterparts have you received?
18. What has this led to?
19. What is the culture of the private sector in funding civil society?
20. How do you evaluate the impact that your research has on policy influence? What tools do you use?
21. How has competition affected your organization's research quality and output?
22. Has the lack of funding affected your operation in terms of reducing your capacity to influence?
23. What are the approaches or sources of influence used among the following four:
 - Positional (position of the organization vis-à-vis policy makers)
 - Expertise (niche)
 - Personal (personal ties with policy makers)
 - Experiential (experience from elsewhere particularly from countries advanced on the topic)
24. What does the policy making process/regime look like in Ethiopia?
25. What are your recommendations for policy institutions to have a meaningful role in policy influence?