

Joss

JOURNAL OF
SOMALI STUDIES

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1, 2013



JOURNAL OF SOMALI STUDIES
Volume 1, Issue 1, 2014
Pp 11-33

**Somalia: An Overview of Primary and
Secondary Education**

Mohamed A. Eno,
*St Clements University Somalia, &
ADNOC Technical Institute, Abu Dhabi, UAE*
sankadhudhi@yahoo.com

Omar A. Eno,
Portland State University, USA

Abderrazak Dammak
*University of Exeter, UK &
ADNOC Technical Institute, Abu Dhabi, UAE*

Monica N. W. Mweseli
University of Nairobi, Kenya

.....

The intellectual can be the lightning rod for the implementation of [a] new ethic. We must teach our people by example. We must by the same token learn from them. We must install and strengthen, wherever it exists, the importance of tolerance and of accommodating the views of others. – Ali J. Ahmed (1995:151)

Introduction: A Glance at Education in Somalia

In order to understand the dialectics of education in Somalia, particularly at the levels of primary and secondary studies, it behooves us to shed some light on the background: the traditional Qur'anic school where the task of conventional learning starts. The reason for this is, before formal school learning, the Somali child undergoes a traditional pedagogical system in which s/he starts

learning Islam's Holy Scripture in a Qur'anic school as young as from age four. Here, s/he learns how to read and write the Arabic alphabet, which is the basis for Qur'anic as well as Arabic-language studies. In due course, the learners are expected to master the reading of the Qur'an, usually based on rote memorization, to "commit the Quran – as much of it as possible – to memory", but without comprehension of the text (Hersi, 1977:38).

Although we concur with Hersi (ibid) on the learners' memorization of the Qur'an, we believe that in the *dugsi* or Qur'anic school, getting "more familiar with the Arabic language" does not usually take place in a comprehensive manner. In addition, the learning of Arabic or *Tafsiir* (interpretation of the Qur'an) did not take place in the mainstream *dugsi* or Qur'anic school. For the kind of exegetic undertaking implied in the term "tafsiir," there existed specialized and more advanced learning centers that enrolled adult learners rather than children at the beginning stage of mastery of the Holy Scripture.

However, with the basic ability of reading and writing the Qur'an, students had the opportunity of enrolling in formal schools where their reading and writing skills would help them considerably, particularly those who joined Arabic medium schools or, in the case of the study of Arabic and Islamic studies, non-Qur'anic schools. Unlike the non-Qur'anic learning institutions, the Qur'anic schools of the 1960s and 1970s or earlier in urban centers consisted of a large room that accommodated both male and female learners in a co-educational system. They sat on the ground and wrote on *loox*, wooden slates or tablets of varying sizes. Therefore, what the colonial administrations and proponents of colonial literature introduced as "formal" school or learning was actually preceded by the formal mastering of the Holy Script; where *carabka* (the tongue) and *caqliga* (the mind) were initially drilled to a more formal commitment to the faith. Robert Hess (1966:169) provides strong evidence to the Somali people's commitment to the Qur'an as he writes, "Throughout most of the colonial period, there was practically no educational system in the colony other than the traditional Koranic schools."

The Cradle of Secular Education in Somalia

Indeed, like many other nations in Africa, the system of secular education in Somalia began during the colonial period, accelerating its pace after the Second World War (Touval, 1963:82). This colonial system of education, despite its advantages, brought an enduring perplexity to the country's education, where the diversity of the dominant colonial languages (English in the north and Italian in the south) complicated the streamlining of the national education program after independence and unification of the two sister zones.

It is noteworthy, though, that the British colonial administration had established some good English-medium schools as pioneering centers of secular learning in British Somaliland, notwithstanding the unimpressive enrollment figures, probably resulting from parents not sending their children to the *gaalo* (infidels') schools. In the south (e.g. Mogadishu, Merca, and Kismayo), outstanding institutions with Italian medium of instruction were established. Touval (1963:82) suggests that during this colonial period "change was taking place" in the education sector; while Hess (1966:169), on the other hand, entertains the view that the undesirable situation of education in Italian Somaliland could be described as "a complete neglect."

However, apart from the mainstream school system, the Italian colonial administration introduced adult evening classes whose objective was, as Rodney (1974:240) observed of colonial Africa "...to train Africans to help man the local administration at the lowest ranks, and to staff the private capitalist firms which meant the participation of few Africans in the domination of the continent as a whole." Similar to Rodney's view, Hess (P. 187) notes that such training prepared the Somali "only for subservience to his Italian masters."

At the attainment of independence in 1960, there were about 230 primary schools and approximately 10 secondary schools consisting of general (ordinary) and technical/vocational institutions. Notably, from the colonial period until the introduction and subsequent adoption of the Somali orthography in 1972 the country was still in

search of a decisive policy to introduce a consistent national educational curriculum that adhered to a single medium of instruction. Commenting on the predicament, Laitin (1977:114) remarks, "...the recognition of Arabic, English and Italian as official languages, and the use of Arabic as the medium of instruction in the early years of school, with English used in the later years - became, by default, the national policy."

A few years after independence, state preference of English as the medium of instruction gained considerable momentum. Italian declined as a choice, while Arabic has been trailing English. Almost all schools were set for the adoption of English; in lower primary, especially from 2nd to 4th grade, (elementary) English was taught only as a subject, while other subjects were conducted in Arabic. In the intermediate grades, from 5th grade to 8th grade, and even through secondary school from grade 9 to 12, the medium of learning for all subjects was converted to English, followed by Arabic as a subject only. Quoting Cali Garaad Jaamac, a former education minister in one of the post-independence Somali administrations, Laitin (1977:105-6) writes:

After a careful study of the problems and the needs of the country, we propose that English should be gradually brought in as the common medium of instruction throughout the whole Republic...Beginning this year, however, Italian will not be taught in new third- year elementary classes and English will be introduced instead...English will take over completely over a period of six to seven years.

The Rise and Fall of Somalia's Primary and Secondary Education

Somali education rose significantly during the military regime of Mohamed Siad Barre, which seized power on 21st October 1969 in a bloodless coup. After the introduction of Somali orthography in 1972, massive education campaigns followed. At this early stage of its rule, the military junta initially won the support of the masses. Compulsory primary schools as well as secondary education institutions were built, many of them on self-help schemes. Intensive teacher-training programs were designed for the different levels of schools, and the College of Education and other state projects were

assigned the broad task of producing primary and secondary school teachers in one of the most rigorous and most intensive teacher-training programs in the history of Somali education. This and the orthography of the Somali language are considered as milestone achievements attributed to the military administration. For, in less than a decade of military rule, the enrollment of primary school students, which stood at 28,000 in 1970, rose to 271,000 by 1982; with an institutional increase of 1407 by 1980, up from mere 287 schools in 1970, subsequently raising the number of teachers to a well trained workforce of 3,376 by 1981 (Bennaars, Seif, & Mwangi, 1996).

The early gains, however, were derailed by a host of factors which mainly related to the increase of malfeasance in the top echelons of the military administration and the civil service. The decline of a budget of 11% in the mid-1970s to less than 2% allocation to the national education sector towards the end of 1990 could be related to several factors that had a negative impact on the economy and social and political life of the masses. For instance, the 1977 Somalo-Ethiopian war and the ensuing aborted coup, the militarization of the budget (as with the rest of Africa, where social services got short shrift of everything), massive debt-service allocations, and the conspicuous tribalization of the institutions, all contributed to the deterioration of state policy towards education. Consequently, the phenomenon left only about 640 schools and approximately 660 teachers in operation shortly before the collapse of the military regime in early 1991, placing Somalia among the countries with “the lowest school enrolment rates in the world” (UNDP, 1998:69; 2001:82).

The departure of well-trained Somali professional teachers from the classrooms further dented the nation’s education system, enormously contributing to the brain drain; similar to what was also experienced in other parts of the continent. Brittain (1994) and Bayart (1993) discuss a great deal about the vicious scenario of Africa’s institutionalized corruption and its impact on the intellectual bankruptcy the continent experienced through the resultant brain drain. Taking a similar position, Eno (2005) indicates how scholarships, international seminars, and workshops were used in Somalia as instruments to advance certain ethnic groups and as a

reward to appease those loyal to the ruling clique. Recalling the trends, Ali (1995:73) characterizes the predicaments of the 1980s as “unbearable conditions” which prompted a large number of the educated human capital, among them engineers, medical doctors, teachers, veterinarians, geologists, and agronomists, to flee the country either due to personal security reasons or lack of professional achievement and self-esteem.

It was during this period of drastic economic and political pressure caused by the military regime and its security apparatus that some of the most experienced educators and educational leaders abandoned their jobs in search of ‘greener pastures’ abroad or a better-paying job in the private sector. In due course, utilization of the vast amount of educational talent, sharpened over the years and vested in graduate teachers, (the pillars of expertise in Somali education), started dwindling at a tempo faster than could be explicated. Most of this essential manpower was made to consider the teaching profession as what Hans (2003:288) described as “a stopgap whilst looking for something better.”

From the same perspective, Urch (1997:406) argues, “By the mid-80’s the nation’s bureaucracy had begun to crumble and teachers were not being paid. As a consequence, teachers found employment elsewhere, schools closed, and teaching material disappeared.” Further shedding more light on the multifarious repercussions, Ali (1995:73) acknowledges how “the country suffered a severe ‘brain drain’” due to the legitimization of malfeasance along ethnic qualification. Confirming Ali’s view above, Mohamed Eno (2005), after interviewing members of former educational policymakers during Barre’s military administration, reports on how ethnocracy rather than meritocracy was the most prevalent criterion for promotion; as well as how that policy contributed to the impairment of teaching and learning in the country’s educational institutions.

Moreover, the effects of unprecedented ethnic fast-multimillionairization of individuals with the least education played a significant role in the ensuing social disarray and drastic economic decline in the 1980s. Without doubt, these negative effects were augmented by factors such as the Somalia-Ethiopia war of 1977-1978

(mentioned above) and the Cold War politics of the 1970s. These factors had a heavy impact on a country that had developed no potential to exploit its available natural resources but instead adhered to the eccentric culture of dependence on foreign aid – through the effectual manipulation of politics of Arabization and the political economy of the Cold War.

Civil Anarchy and the Restoration of Primary and Secondary Education

In late December 1990, the civil war reached a culmination of years of hemorrhaging that came home to Mogadishu to roost. It took several shapes and covered various geographical locations, though mainly in the South and Central South. Due to persistent inter-clan rivalry and multifaceted intra-clan and sub-clan animosities, the warlords and politicians further obstructed a variety of measures to restore stability. Even after the installation of several administrations such as Transitional National Government, Transitional Federal Government, the Administration of Puntland, the Administration of Somaliland, and the current Federal Government of Somalia, stability remains an unpromising commodity in that a conflict can flare up any time and for various reasons, though mainly through Islamist provocations in recent times. These confrontations have spread to schools, chiefly to hunt down a target or recruit children studying in the institution.

The immense psychological traumas that occur as a result of these attacks and their impact on the young minds in the targeted learning institutions have not yet been investigated. But understandably, they take a huge toll on the learners and their teachers. For example, a young girl from Baidoa relates her experience of such an incident to Amnesty International (2011:42): “It was a male teacher who was killed. They shot him.” In a similarly heinous situation, a young teenage girl from the district of Wadajir in Mogadishu narrates the impact of one of Al Shabab’s raids on her school: “One teacher was killed because he refused to obey. He was brave; he was the one who was advocating for the rights of the girls” (Amnesty, 2011:41).

In Galkacyo the calm and stability often emphasized is sometimes betrayed by the onslaught of marauding armed clan militia and/or rival Islamist organizations. Again, as Amnesty International (2011:39-40) details in one of its reports on the Human Rights situation in this part of Somalia:

Armed conflict over the past four years has taken a toll on children and young people's ability to access education. School buildings have been destroyed or damaged during indiscriminate or disproportionate shelling. A 10 year-old girl, who used to live in Galkayo South, in the Galgaduud region [sic] in central Somalia, until she fled in January 2010, explained: *'In Galkayo, fighting started between al-Shabab and Ahlu Sunna Waal Jama. It was in January 2010. Al-Shabab came into the town. I was going to school in level two, but the building was destroyed in that last fighting. It was a private school. There were children in the school who died and were injured.'* (Italics in original)

Attacks on innocent children and teachers in learning institutions have warranted parents' skepticism about sending their children to school as the latter are vulnerable to abduction and other life threatening consequences during raids at schools. Ever since Siad Barre's ouster from power, the education sector has suffered considerable setbacks, including the emergence of uncoordinated networks of private education organizations that use not only diverse syllabi but also different media in the instruction delivery. For instance, according to a former school official who left the country after threats by Al-Shabab, "Some institutions use various Arabic syllabi generated in Kuwait, or a program adopted from Saudi Arabia as well as certain other Arab countries; others employ Somali, while others embrace English syllabi merged with instruction material borrowed from neighboring countries, somewhat supplemented with what is locally available." While these are private institutions for the elite with means to educate their children, missing from the scene is the national education system, which uniformly accommodated the poor. This need saw the early intervention of international organizations like UNICEF and UNESCO, and is also a reason why most available literature on Somalia's post-civil-war education is sourced from these institutions. The next section draws on such reports.

The Role of International Organizations in the Revival of Somali Education

As a UNICEF report (2012) confirms, “In the 2011/2012 school year, due to increased humanitarian funding, 429,974 children (43% girls) were enrolled in UNICEF-sponsored schools” (p. 26), which use Somali as a medium of instruction. This figure seems to be a combination of what was recently categorized as three zones, including Central South Zone, Puntland, and Somaliland. Earlier in 2005, another UNICEF document titled ‘Back to School Campaign – Somalia’ demonstrates that “only about 20% of primary school age children have access to formal education,” while a 6th September 2013 press release by the same UN agency under the title ‘Massive campaign to get one million Somali children into school to be launched’ reveals that “[o]nly four out of every ten children are in school.”

A report under the title ‘National Education Plan’ issued by the former Somali Transitional Federal Government’s Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education (Somali Republic, MEC&HE, and 2011:2) confirms:

Education umbrellas, privately owned schools, colleges and higher education institutions have been established to cover the services that the ministry of education was providing to the people before 1991. But again this effort could not provide quality free education throughout the country.

In addition, the document describes that “the role of the Ministry of Education in the education sector is not so great,” subsequently highlighting how “significant concerns have been raised” about the enhancement of the services needed to be realized through the country. An example of these concerns is mentioned as “The huge fund given to our education sector by the donors through the international and local NGOs,” but whose effect is not reflected in any significant achievement in the education sector (Somali Republic, MEC&HE, p. 2).

The efforts of these institutions have no doubt created jobs for adult teachers and learning opportunities for many Somali children

who would have otherwise been left idle and in many circumstances prone to negative social influences. But the efforts do not contain all the potential problems related to education. For example, the outcome of the formal performance assessment of 2012 shows “fewer girls than boys continue to take and pass exams in all of Somalia,” with more concern at the secondary level education (UNICEF, 2012:27). However, a comparative analysis of the 2011/2012 data on final primary school exam results indicate that almost 97% of examined candidates in Puntland and 93% in Somaliland realized over 90% success. As the UNICEF Annual Report 2012 highlights, “The scaling up of emergency education response in 2011 and covering the school year 2011/12 brought in significant funding and over 35 partners were involved in implementing these activities in CSZ (Central South Zone)” (p. 28).

Despite the endeavor, and for reasons it does not mention, the report suggests students in Puntland and Somaliland to have “met expected standards” for the literacy section with a score of over 60%, while comparatively “only 19% met the expected level for numeracy” with an indication that students in Puntland did better than their counterparts in Somaliland, with scores of 70% and 23% compared to 64% and 15% in the respective learning levels measured. The report, however, notes the lack of clarity on the exact reasons behind the undesirable numeracy results, although it hints at “weakness in quality and systematic teaching and learning,” which could be related to “the lack of any systematic teaching of handwriting or the development of basic numeracy concepts” (p. 28). When a math teacher in Mogadishu was asked by one of the authors (Omar) to explain the problem, he touched on a combination of factors, mainly reiterating the “shortage of qualified math teachers with the latest teaching techniques.”

The UNICEF Annual Report 2012 establishes, however, that a total of 29,368 candidates including 33% girls registered for the 2012 final exams for each exit level (Primary 8 and Form 4) but that at least 27,854 sat for the final exam. Grade 8 had about 20,701 candidates, of whom 33% were girls, registered, but that 19,613 (33% girls) took the final test, (p. 28). A results analysis of Grade 12 candidates reveals

that out of 8,667 registered candidates, 8,241 sat for the final exam, including 28% girls. The report suggests that the dropout rate between the registered and the examined candidates stands at “only 5%,” indicating a remarkable success rate of “over 90%” (p. 29). Another laudable remark is the increase in the number of students compared to 2011, which stood at 24,650, including a female population of 7,746, equivalent to 31% of all the pupils examined (p. 28).

The 2012 Somaliland Ministry of Education operated with a consolidated budget of USD 8.8 million. Although this amount is much less than the budget needed for this crucial sector, it nevertheless suggests a significant annual increase when compared to USD 2.3 million in 2009, USD 2.4 million in 2010, and USD 6.2 million in 2011. The personnel costs of the 2012 budget have been well reduced to a controllable level of 67.38% compared to 2011, which consumed 90% of the same sub-sector (p. 29). The increase of the education budget of the Administration of Puntland was low; “from 1.75% in 2010, 2% in 2011, to 3.5% in 2012” with a planned increment of 6% for 2013. However, teacher remuneration in Puntland “has been increased twice: by 35% in 2011 and by 49% in 2012,” although the report does not furnish the amount of net salary the teacher receives monthly (ibid). On the other hand, despite the assumption that the “trend of budget allocation is positive,” as the report emphasizes, “nevertheless, it is far from the African average of 20%” (p. 31).

In spite of the problems, these organizations take into consideration the very sensitive issue of quality, without which mere provision of education may not matter. In order to devise an aligned standard Quality Assurance system in Puntland and Somaliland, Africa Education Trust assisted in the establishment of a Quality Assurance Unit. Also in the administration of Puntland, a teacher’s assessment document titled ‘Minimum Standards for Teacher Certification’ has been completed and endorsed for adoption, while UNICEF staff made a contribution in the establishment of an Education Management Information System for the entire provinces (UNICEF Annual Report 2012).

Concerning the Central South Zone (CSZ), where the umbilical cord of the Somali impasse is attached to, an undated UNICEF Report states that “[l]imited progress was made” concerning mapping of schools in the Zone (Mogadishu and related regions) for proper census. This is due to: (a) lack of financial resources, and (b) absence of support from private schools. Consequently, the lack of cooperation between local and international institutions has led considerably to the collection of “insufficient data to analyze the questionnaire” (UNICEF Annual Report 2012, p. 30). As an undated UNICEF document titled ‘The Situation of Women and Children in Somalia’ indicates, “Education is even more difficult to access in CSZ.” The problem made it impossible to ascertain the number of children in schools across CSZ. Notwithstanding the unfavorable circumstances, the report claims that “UNICEF and cluster partners helped keep 571,607 children in school through the 2011/12 school year despite famine, displacement and conflict,” (<http://www.unicef.org/somalia/children.html>).

In comparison, the Primary School Census Statistics Yearbook of the Administration of Puntland, Volume I, published in 2012, reports that the registered primary school children, from Grade 1 to Grade 8, consist of 91,451 students, of whom 43% are girls. A similar report by the breakaway republic of Somaliland registers a total primary school population of 184,682, including 43% girls. A further breakdown of both documents reveals 42% of those pupils as living in rural areas, against their urban counterparts at 58% for Puntland; and 70% urban dwellers compared to 30% rural student population in Somaliland. The pupils-teacher ratio (PTR) in both zones stands at 22:1 for Puntland and 31:1 for Somaliland.

The Widening Teacher Training Gap in Somali Education

They [teachers] must possess enough command of the subject they are going to teach to be able to differentiate what is important and central from what is incidental and peripheral. They must have a philosophy of education to help guide them in their role as teachers. They must

know how human beings learn and how to create environments that facilitate learning. – James M. Cooper (2003:3).

In spite of the good intentions of the communities and efforts of the international organizations involved, streamlining lower education at the primary and secondary school grades is hampered by the lack of qualified teachers with basic subject knowledge. According to UNICEF (2012:27), “The poor quality of education is mostly attributed to the poor quality of teaching,” where the teacher-student ratio in Somalia is estimated at “1:32”, with caution that this figure “varies significantly” from one administrative zone to another. On the contrary, education analyst Mohamoud Dahir Omar reveals a different student-teacher ratio. Referring to a 2013 evaluation report on Somaliland education, Omar (2014) analyzes that “pupils' certified teacher Ratio 64:1” demonstrates a shortage of qualified personnel in the teaching profession. Despite the shortcomings, UNICEF and partner organizations are trying to deal with the situation, reporting on how “enhanced on-the-job and in-service training was provided for 6,742 (20% female) formal and non-formal education teachers” (ibid, p. 26).

Quoting Obanya, Mbachu & Dorgu (2014:28) maintain, “What makes Education central to any discussion of sustainable development is that Education deals with the awakening and nurturing of human potentials.” Therefore, for humans to realize sustainable development, ‘nurturing of human potential’ has to start with the professionals whose career would put them in constant communication with the human brains to be molded and sharpened for participation in the huge ‘development’ task ahead.

Among other factors, the analysis underlines the importance of teacher training and professional development. In their discussion on the impact of individual teachers’ “teaching style” in 72 primary schools in neighboring Kenya, Ngware et al, (2014:3) report, “Quality of instructional delivery is an important determinant of the extent to which the teaching process has an impact on learning achievement.” The researchers argue that learners’ “learning achievement can be improved through quality teaching,” even in situations where problems of “class size” are extant. However, in a study focusing on

the impact of class size on 4th grade mathematics students, Breton (2014:56) contends: "After controlling for numerous characteristics of the students' learning environment, the results indicate that each additional student in a class is associated with a decline in average test scores of 2.4 points." Hence, the importance of the student-teacher ratio discussed above and its consideration in educational development.

As we have witnessed from the evolution and innovation in the teaching profession and industry in recent years, teacher responsibility has taken advanced steps, requiring teachers to be able to identify the existence of learner hindrances to learning, investigate them, and find solutions by action/applied research (Henson, 1996). These and other emerging trends make necessary the development and implementation of high quality teacher education curriculum capable of meeting the emerging challenges in modern education systems. It requires, in addition to pre-service and in-service training, dedicated men and women professionals with enthusiasm for choosing teaching as a career. Such qualities should be part and parcel of the guiding principles of the broader picture of a national education curriculum that commits every teacher and institution to the shared common values that interpret the mission and vision of an individual school and community as an indispensable unit of the larger social organization.

A debate of this nature brings into focus whether the teacher has been cultivated adequately to be able to function as a member who fosters the ideals of "a learning community" environment as compared to a "traditional school" setting. These demanding professional attributes cannot be met by an inadequately trained teacher, not to mention an untrained one, recruited for the sole intention of filling an existing gap for lack of a 'better one'. Developing a community of learners needs a cultural shift of the school from its traditional learning culture to an environment that hosts a learning community of admirable professional quality (DuFour & Faker, 1998; DuFour et al., 2005), and whose infrastructure fosters "objective discourse focused on student learning and practice" (Brendefur et al., 2014:39).

A recultured school ambience will then play the role of providing “a collaborative improvement” (Brendefur et al, p. 40) by equipping the teacher to utilize a multifocal lens in tackling his/her duties towards improving the learning condition of not only the slow and average learner but equally the achievement of the above-average learner. This is to argue that without providing the teachers with sufficient training, they will not be able to deal with the bridging necessitated by the “gaps left by teaching materials,” nor will they be helpful in developing “alternative ideas and supplemental materials” (Brendefur et al., p. 39) to fill any gaps identified during the teaching-learning sessions taking place in the classroom environment.

Although serious concerns were raised regarding the need for teacher training in Somalia, the solution still seems to be out of reach. The idealistic pupil-teacher-ratio of 22:1 (but challenged above by education analyst Mohamoud Dahir Omar), though suitable, is underpinned by other difficulties that do not respond to the ideals of successful teaching. One among a variety of such conundrums is appropriate selection of teaching as a career by those in the business, and the quality of training offered to the novice teacher or the professional development of the trained leader entrusted to educate society’s future leaders. As several interviewed teachers mentioned, in a situation where they don’t have many choices, anything that can help them sustain a livelihood comes as a perfect opportunity; including teaching. A female teacher replied that she joined teaching “due to the shortage of women professional teachers to help the schoolgirls,” regardless of her lack of basic teaching skills.

Notwithstanding the presence of under-trained teachers and their endeavor to cope with day-to-day execution of their duties, another difficulty is augmented by the lack of reference books for the school subjects and the inability of the teachers to self-develop as independent learners and adult professionals. We raise this point because the issue of teachers’ lack of proficiency in English (the language in which most books are available) has been emphasized not only by the international donors engaged in the enhancement of education but by teachers and education leaders as well. According to an education officer from Puntland who talked to one of the authors

(Mohamed) at Centro Hotel in Sharjah, UAE, in mid-2013, "One of the most serious problems in our education system is our students' poor English language competency, which obviously emanates from the teachers' low proficiency." The same sentiments were shared by participants from Somaliland, particularly an expert in legal affairs who stated that the domination of English was a reality. A leader of a private school in Mogadishu informed one of the authors (Omar) that "teachers who are poor in English and cannot benefit from available books," stands as one of the problems the country's education authorities have to address.

Aside from English as an important medium and therefore a needed subject, a primary concern also involves teachers' mastery of the subjects they teach. The context of our discussion here is related to the depth and breadth the teacher should have acquired in the subject before any discussion on classroom management, student assessment, motivation, and other teaching skills are brought forward. Thus, a primary school teacher in Mogadishu admits, "Although we are trained, I think we still need more because only a few seminars and workshops cannot be the same as a full teaching course of three or four years. But we are trying our best." Despite the motivation to teach, whether triggered by intrinsic or extrinsic factors, not much can be expected from inadequate training coupled with little subject knowledge. The necessity for rigorous teacher education, and continuous but relevant professional development, is justified on the basis of existing scholarly evidence. For, as Brendefur et al., (2014:36) maintain, "Learning to teach well, even for veteran teachers, is a complex, uncertain, and difficult task."

The enormous task of education facing every administration in Somalia, whether the Federal Government or Regional Administration, should be dealt with by prioritizing constructively designed, high-quality teacher-training programs that equip the trainee teacher with the necessary knowledge and skills. Once these leaders of the crucial teaching and learning tasks in the classroom are well-trained and able to solve teaching-related problems independently, only then can we be confident of their quality of teaching in the implementation of their vital duty. Therefore, while

appreciating what was achieved with the little training available and the combined efforts of all the institutions, communities and individuals who made that endeavor a success, improving this sector should be a major priority in the development policy of the country.

Qalinle Hussein (2012) reports 1,100 graduate teachers of a 2-year school-based teacher-training course named “Strengthening of Capacity of Teacher Training” (SCOTT) implemented in the break-away republic of Somaliland. Hussein also mentions a 2015 target of 6,872 teachers, which is expected to realize an increase of 13% aimed at decreasing the number of *untrained* teachers to 5 percent. However, the trained number mentioned here includes “teachers from universities, secondary colleges and primary schools,” as Hussein notes. An analysis of the data evinces that the number of primary and secondary school teachers still remains below the required number of the teaching workforce. The consequence of untrained or inadequately trained teachers is that children may find themselves overwhelmed by traditional teacher domination where, according to Egan (2003:11), “[t]he master told the novices about the subject, in lecture and argument,” and not the kind of interactive class that accommodates learner experiences.

The challenge is that, apart from rote subject knowledge, a teacher should be familiar with a basic understanding of the functioning of the mind with regard to human habits during the process of learning. Accordingly, any educational policy designed to provide a child with fair learning opportunity must go beyond the enduring belief “that autonomous individuals, pursuing personal interests, can produce significant improvement in student performance” (Lipton & Wellman, 2001:119). The teacher training/education curriculum which the policy makers and curriculum designers develop should aim at the production of a teacher who is a provoker of talents and motivator of learners; that is, one who is a facilitator of the thinking potential of his/her students in the process of curriculum implementation. By doing so, the teacher is not only a classroom leader but also assumes the multiple roles as a guide, mentor, and model, to name a few. The requirement of these multifarious qualities of the teacher exerts more emphasis on the planning and

development of an effective teacher education curriculum. From this point of view, we raise the concern that sufficient budget should be allocated to the teacher education programs since the teaching workforce is the foundation on which the pillars of the national education goals and development of academic consciousness are firmly constructed.

The Enduring Complexity of Curriculum and Medium in Somalia

Brubaker's (1982:2) definition of what constitutes curriculum is based on "what persons experience in a setting." Tanner and Tanner (1980:43) seem to broaden the scope by describing curriculum as the "reconstruction of knowledge and experience, systematically developed...to enable the learner to increase his or her control of knowledge and experience." Phenix (1962:64) maintains that "the curriculum should consist entirely of knowledge which comes from the disciplines." Taba (1962:11) views curriculum as pertinent to "a plan for learning," rather than the content of what is taught itself. Oliva (1982:10), however, denotes curriculum as "a plan or program for all the experiences which the learner encounters under the direction of the school." Considering the incongruity in the definition and scope of curriculum, Beane, Toepfer, and Alessi (1986:35) caution us that: "[i]f one selects one definition to have 'most favored status', one should still recognize that several definitions do exist and are just as favored by others. Thus, they cannot be rejected lightly since all have advantages and disadvantages." In the same line of thought, Egan (2003:10) criticizes, "The field seems to have no clear logical boundaries."

Apart from the incongruity in the definitional scope of the term 'curriculum', its interpretations are laden with several important factors, one of which is how they guide the curriculum designers/developers in targeting the appropriate destination of the learner in accordance with the values of a given society. The development of an appropriate curriculum, at the initial stage, lays open the necessity for well-trained developers who are abreast of the global as well as national requirements at the various but

interconnected levels of the learners. The scope of responsibility of the developer is also a matter of great importance, based on the expected outcome of the curriculum. At the next level, and upon its development, the curriculum cannot function without trained and dedicated men and women to implement it to the satisfaction of all the different stakeholders.

In post-civil-war Somalia, the coordination and implementation of a unified school curriculum has been a difficult problem at the core of education. With the existence of over seven educational umbrellas and various agencies operating in the country over the past two decades “without a unified national syllabus to guide primary and secondary school instruction,” the magnitude of the enduring perplexity in Somali education becomes evident (Farah, 2013). The lack of coordination, in effect, contributed to the complexity in the streamlining of appropriate and reliable Quality Assurance. However, it was only as recently as 2013 that the network of “education umbrellas are representing 1,130 private schools across Somalia” agreed to set a blueprint for a unified syllabus as a measure of standardizing the education system at the primary and secondary grades. The preparation and merging of the multi-curricular systems, according to Abdi Moalim (2013), “took about three years.” Moalim also notes how a unified medium still remains a pending issue, particularly when the seven networks have not reached any agreement to overcome the diversity of their media of instruction where Somali, Arabic, and English are used according to the preference of each individual institution and/or umbrella.

Conformity to the same curriculum, despite the diversity of medium, is expected to set the direction ahead for the students. On the other hand, the disparity of the media of instruction calls for a cumbersome translation of the various textbooks taught in each of the levels from grade 1 to grade 12. The translation task will demand men and women who are not only subject experts and/or specialists in one or more education areas but experts with fluency in the original language of the textbook as well as skills in the art of translation. Secondly, it will involve large sums of money as investment by the

education institutions, which parents will have to pay indirectly, once those costs are included in the production of the textbooks.

Conclusion

The essay discussed Somali education in various periods, with a focus on the era of civil anarchy. It argues that although the local communities and international agencies have tried their best to play a significant role, diverse problems do exist in the core areas of curriculum, medium, and teacher training. With neither public institutions nor concrete policies designed to address the heavy responsibility of producing a cogent teaching workforce as a national priority in the education sector, Somali children will have to go a long way before experiencing good teaching by well-trained professional teachers, equivalent in quality to or even better than the graduates from the College of Education in its heyday. In order to deal with each of the inter-related problems facing primary and secondary education in Somalia, an exhaustive study is necessary to interrogate not only what is lacking and therefore essential for improvement, but also what can be gleaned from the experiences and achievements made in the current activities of agencies, local institutions, and authorities involved in the revival of the national education system.

References

- Ahmed, A. J. (1995) "Daybreak is Near: Won't You Become Sour?" In Ali J. Ahmed (ed.), *The Invention of Somalia*. Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press.
- Ali, A. Q. (1995) "The Predicament of the Somali Studies" in Ali J. Ahmed (ed.), *The Invention of Somalia*. Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press.
- Bayart, J. F. (1993) *The State in Africa: The politics of the Belly*. New York: Longman. Beane, J. A., Alessi, S. J., and Toepfer, Jr., C. F. (1986). *Curriculum Planning and Development*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bennaars, G. A., Seif, H. A., & Mwangi, D. (1996). *Mid-Decade Review of Progress Towards Education for All – The Somali Country Case*

- Study*. Paris, International Consultative Forum on Education for All, UNESCO, February.
- Brendefur, J. L., Whitney, B., Stewart, R. A., Pfister, J., and Zarbinisky, J. (2014). "Instructional Learning Teams: A Case Study." *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*, Vol. 3, No. 1; pp. 36-46.
- Breton, T. R. (2014). "Evidence that Class Size Matters in 4th Grade Mathematics: An Analysis of TIMSS 2007 Data for Colombia." *International Journal of Educational Development*, pp. 34, 51-57.
- Brittain, V. (1994). "The Continent That Lost Its Way" *World Press Review*, pp. 22-24.
- Brubaker, D. L. (1982). *Curriculum Planning: The Dynamics of Theory and Practice*. Glenview, Illinois: Scott Foresman & Co.
- Cooper, J. M. (2003). "The Teacher as a Reflective Decision Maker." In James M. Cooper (Ed.), *Classroom Teaching Skills* (7th edition). Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- DuFour, R., and Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional Learning Communities at Work: Best Practices for Enhancing Student Achievement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & DuFour, R. B. (2005). *On Common Ground: The Power of Professional Learning Communities*. Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.
- Eno, Mohamed A. (2005) "What Are the Main Causes of the Predicament in the Acquisition of ESL in Somalia?" MA Dissertation in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), University of Sunderland, UK.
- Farah, A. I. (2013). "Case Study: Absent Curriculum from Somalia's Schools for More than Two Decades." <http://www.inesite.org/en/blog/case-study-absent-curriculum-from-the-schools-for-more-than-two-decades> (Accessed 27 April 2014).
- Henson, K. T. (1996). "Teachers as Researchers." In J. Sikula (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Teacher Education*. New York, NY: Macmillan, pp. 53-64.
- Hersi, A. A. (1977). "The Arab Factor in Somali History: The Origins and the Development of Arab Enterprise and Cultural Influences

- in the Somali Peninsula." PhD Dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles.
- Hess, R. L. (1966). *Italian Colonialism in Somalia*. Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press.
- Hussein, Q. (2012). "Somaliland: 1,100 Teachers Complete Teacher Training Courses." (16 May). (<http://somalilandpress.com/somaliland-1100-teachers-complete-teacher-training-courses-28640>) (Accessed 14 April 2014).
- Laitin, D. (1977). *Politics, Language and Thought: The Somali Experience*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Lipton, L. & Wellman, B. (2001). "From Staff Development to Professional Development: Supporting Thoughtful Adults for Thinking Schools." In Arthur L. Costa (Ed.), *Developing Minds: A Resource Book for Teaching Thinking*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, pp. 118-122.
- Mbachu, C. E., and Dorgu, T. E. (2014). "Making the Nigerian School Environment and Curriculum More Functional and Responsive for Human Capacity Development for the Year 2020." *Journal of Curriculum and Teaching*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 28-35.
- Ministry of Education – Puntland State of Somalia (2012). Primary School Census Statistics Yearbook 2011-2012, Volume One, Technical Report. (http://www.unicef.org/somalia/SOM_resources_primschoolcensuspunt.pdf) (Accessed 31 December 2013).
- Ministry of Education and Higher Education 2011/2 (2012). Primary School Census Statistics Yearbook. (http://www.unicef.org/somalia/SOM_resources_primschoolcensus20112.pdf) (Accessed 31 December 2013).
- Moalim, A. (2013). "Somali education coalition releases unified curriculum." (http://sabahionline.com/en_GB/articles/hoa/articles/features/2013/05/29/feature-01)
- Ngware, M. W., Oketch, M., and Mutisya, M. (2014). "Does Teaching Style Explain Differences in Learner Achievement in Low and High Performing Schools in Kenya?" *International Journal of Educational Development*, Volume 39, May, pp. 3-12. (November 2013).

- Oliva, P. F. (1982). *Developing the Curriculum*. Boston: Little, Brown, & Company
- Omar, M. D. (2014). "Somaliland: Challenges of Curriculum Implementation." 4 February. <http://somalilandsun.com/index.php/opinion/4905-somaliland-challenges-of-curriculum-implementation> (Accessed 22 March 2014)
- Phenix, P. (1962). "The Disciplines as Curriculum Content." In Harry Passow (Ed.) *Curriculum Crossroads*. NY: Teachers College, pp. 57-65.
- Somali Republic Ministry of Education, Culture & Higher Education (2011). "National Education Plan." http://planipolis.iiep.unesco.org/upload/Somalia/Somalia_National_Education_Plan_2011.pdf (Accessed 11 March 2013)
- Taba, H. (1962). *Curriculum Development: Theory and Practice*. New York, NY: Harcourt, Brace & World.
- Tanner, D., and Tanner, L. (1980). *Curriculum Development: Theory into Practice* (2nd edition). New York: Macmillan.
- Touval, S. (1963). *Somali Nationalism: International Politics and the Drive for Unity in the Horn of Africa*. Harvard University Press.
- UNDP Somalia (1998). *Human Development Report*.
- UNDP Somalia (2001). *Human Development Report*.
- UNICEF (undated). *The situation of Women and Children in Somalia*. <http://www.unicef.org/somalia/children.html> (Accessed on 2nd January 2014).
- UNICEF Annual Report 2012 for Somalia, ESARO http://www.unicef.org/about/annualreport/files/SomaliaCOAR_2012.pdf (Accessed 11 March, 2013)
- Urch, G. (1997) "Teacher Education and Reconstruction in Somalia." In Hussein M. Adam and Richard Ford (eds.), *Mending Rips in the Sky: Options for Somali Communities in the 21st Century*. Lawrenceville, NJ: The Red Sea Press.