

The Transition of the Education System in the Somali Democratic Republic in the Post Colonial Years

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When the Somali Republic was formed on July 1960, among other things, there was no uniform national education system of the so-called modern kind. Therefore it was necessary for the independent republic to create such a uniform system. The education system that existed at the time of independence was not only inadequate but indeed different between the two regions that were then united. While the Italian system of education was prevalent in the South, the British system of education was prevalent in the North. The latter had a pre-university course consisting of 11 years - 3 for elementary, 4 for intermediate and 4 for the secondary. Arabic was the medium of instruction at the elementary stage, and English at intermediate and secondary stages. There were not many schools that matched the need, inadequate as it was, but the quality of those that existed was very impressive. Most of the teachers were ex-patriots qualified in their fields. There were not many Somali teachers but the best students were selected for teachers. They used to get their training from Sudan and later from the United Kingdom and were highly proficient.

Strategic allocations of the schools in the North.

Most of the schools were boarding schools, located in the rural villages and towns thus matching the Somali nomadic way of life. Among them Dayaha, Lasanod, Beri, Sheikh Odwayna Burao (Girls Intermediate School) Adadlye, Hargeysa Girls School, Hargeysa Boys Trade School, Gabiyla Intermediate School and Amoud Boarding School. All those places were villages or small towns except Hargeysa and Burao.

Accessibility of Enrollment

The enrollment of the people to the limited number of schools was not discriminative. One need not have a civil servant parent or business connection to have access to education. What was needed was parents who were interested in their children's education. The school fees were 300 shillings for a whole year, and this could be afforded by the majority of the Somalis in the interior since they used to export their livestock to most of the neighbouring Arab countries up to Palestine and obtain considerable amounts of money.

Table 1 - Number of schools and students in the British colony, 1955 (1960)

Level of Education	Number of Schools	Students		Total
		Male	Female	
Elementary	20 (38)	1,107 (2,020)	64 (319)	1,171 (2,339)
Intermediate	3 (12)	368 (1,039)	—	368 (1,039)
Trade/Vocational	2	87 (100)	—	87 (100)
Secondary	1 (2)	47 (70)	—	47 (70)

Source: Figures derived from Castagno (1962).

Non-Islamic education was not popular in the northern region during the colonial period. Until 1938, British responsibility for education was confined to grants in aid to a small number of Koranic schools and provided scholarships for a few Somali boys and later girls to be held in Sudan and to a lesser extent in Aden. Progress was made immediately before the war but there was resistance from the local people (Report on British Somaliland, 1949-57). In the southern region the pre-university course consisted of 12 years - 5 for the elementary, 3 for the intermediate and 4 for secondary. Arabic was the medium of instruction in the first two grades of the elementary stage and Italian from the third grade of the elementary stage. The strategic allocations of schools in the southern region was unsatisfactory. «The geographical distribution of schools is reasonably satisfactory in the northern region but leaves much to be desired in the southern region. Benadir has 62 out of a total of 165 elementary schools». (S.D.R., *First Five Year Plan*, 1963-67). Nevertheless, there were outstanding Arabic schools run by the Egyptians notably in the Muduq region. Boarding schools were not popular in the southern region except one in the capital city of Mogadishu. «As Table 2 indicates, there was a striking reduction in number of students from primary to secondary during each period. This high drop-out rate was partly due to parental resistance to send their children away to boarding schools in Mogadishu...» (Bulhan 1980: 32). It wasn't until the trusteeship (1950 onwards) period that the education system in the southern region expanded, and a rapid improvement was made then. A number of professional schools were established. The Higher Institute of Economics and Law started in 1954 and the School of Politics and Administration began in 1950-51.

Table 2 - Number of students in Somalia during UN Trusteeship, 1952, 1959-60

Level of Education	1952		1959-1960	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Primary schools	13,557	986	29,739	6,123
Lower secondary	164	24	971	60
Higher secondary	331	—	427	53

Sources: Figures derived from a more detailed table in Castagno 1962.

However, the Italian neglect of education in the South contributed to the unpopularity of non-Islamic education. The following quotation points to this «...A document explained the fascist logic... We should reserve the strictly necessary

education for sons of chiefs and more important nobilities...» (Bulhan 1980: 31-32). In the event most of the pre-trusteeship schools that existed in the southern region were built under the British military administration (1941-50), and were scattered notably in Kismayo, Galkayo, Warder, Baydhabo, Hudur. However, the most popular school in Mogadishu was financed among others by a Somali businessman called Sharif Bana Aba, whom the school was named after until recently. Shortly, after independence the tension between scholars of different educational backgrounds was apparent, but this was tolerable, largely because the Somalis share the same culture and religion, and thus constitute a nation, despite the existence of the modern state. The objective of the civilian governments in the fields of education, therefore were to ensure the curriculum of the schools, particularly in the early years, was grounded in Somali culture and in an Islamic framework. They in no way, however, alienated other education systems of foreign languages that could enable Somali students or indeed the whole nation to communicate with the outside world. They thus welcomed foreign assistance and favoured objective, positive suggestions, or recommendations. As early as 1962 the UNESCO Education Planning Group recommended that English should be the medium of instruction from the intermediate stage onwards. «If this recommendation is accepted by the government, it would not call for any change in the northern region, but would mean the replacement of Italian by English as the medium of instruction in the southern region... there will be a difficult period of adjustment for persons educated under the Italian system with the Italian cultural background... The immediate difficulties would be very great but it may be in the long term interest of the country to adopt English, which is a 'language of wide currency in the world', as the medium of instruction...» (S.D.R., *First Five year plan*, 1963-67:92). However 2 years after independence there were 233 elementary schools with a total enrollment of 18,754 children of which 4,313 intermediate education. There were 31 intermediate schools including vocational schools, having 124 classes and 4,000 pupils of which 570 were girls. The schools had an annual intake of 1,600. There were also 4 secondary schools for general education having a total enrollment of 425 students including 21 girls.

Vocational Education

There were 7 intermediate schools providing vocational education in religion, home economics, agriculture, typing, book-keeping, elementary maritime engineering, woodwork, masonry, drawing, mechanics and electricity. These schools had altogether 36 classes with a total enrollment of 1,310 students including 242 girls. There were 7 technical schools at the secondary level too. There were 2 institutions for training elementary school teachers, one was the Teacher Training Centre at Amoud and the other one was the Scuola Magistrale at Mogadishu. There was only one institute for higher education, named the University Institute of Mogadishu. Students were sent overseas for higher education, scholarships were offered by various countries, notably, Italy, United States of America, Egypt, Britain, Czechoslovakia, France, Poland, Sudan, Lebanon, Cyprus, West Germany and Australia. This was accepted by the Republic. Moreover, projects of expanding and improving the schools in the Republic were carried out by friendly countries, for instance the USA built among others the Teachers Training Institute in Afgoi,

the Soviet Union built and provided teachers for Banider Secondary School, Mogadishu. The EEC among others built «26 June» secondary school in Hargeysa and «1 July» boarding school in Hargeysa (a secondary School which had been planned to be an institute for higher education) and «15 May» secondary school in Mogadishu. The British Council was represented in the Somali Republic, First in Hargeysa and later in Mogadishu too, where it used to effectively assist schools like Sheikh, Amoud etc. The technical institute in Burao was built by the Federal Republic of West Germany. The Egyptians had schools that were under their tutelage both in the north and the south of the Republic. Subsequently the number of schools in the Republic grew and the standard of education improved.

The New Phase of the Education under the Military Rule

When the military government took over the power in October 1969, they described the basic philosophy of the education that existed as capitalistically orientated. They stressed that education was only available to a small privileged bourgeoisie group in the urban centres, therefore urged the eradication of such a system and the acquisition of a massive egalitarian education system. In 1972, the Somali language was written and chosen as the medium of instruction up to secondary stage, but was first introduced to the elementary schools. The government nationalised all the schools, and announced the closing down of foreign languages. That wasn't evenly implemented but measures were taken against some foreign languages. When the Ministry of Education first visited the schools in the North, initially the local teachers, inspectors and senior officers in the education were transferred from the region, then some were placed in other departments or expelled from the civil service if they didn't meet with the government's approval. Some of the British teachers in Sheikh didn't have their contracts renewed and were later replaced by 4 Soviet teachers. However, Somalization of the education system was the apparent goal. In 1974, the National Literacy Campaign was waged, nomadic education was established, adult schools were increased, schools were built under self-help schemes and finally the enrollment at student level rose and rapidly expanded.

Table 3 - *Number of schools and students for 1969-70, 1973-74 and 1977-78*

Schools and students	1969-70	1973-74	1977-78
Primary schools	292	407	1,085
Male Students	39,033	69,504	145,435
Female Students	9,576	27,399	83,109
Total	48,609	96,903	228,544
Secondary schools	26	42	48
Male Students	5,675	8,727	10,650
Female Students	737	1,773	3,528
Total	6,412	10,500	24,178

Source: Ministry of Education, Mogadishu, Somalia 1979

There was a remarkable increase in numbers at secondary level, specifically in the general secondary schools (GSS). In 1979/80 the total enrollment of these schools was 11,130 in 1982/83. It reached 51,927 in 1983/84, 14,000 in 1984/85, 16,000 and finally 1985/86 it became 13,000 (Somali Ministry of Education, 1984: 12,19).

Even though this increase took place there were, nevertheless, problems as the quotation makes clear: «The rapid expansion of an educational system, brings with it, its own particular stress and strains... difficulties in the distribution of school facilities... national wastage rates at the primary level (for instance)... in the last academic year some 38,667 students were either withdrawn from school or dropped out-of-school. And the highest rates of wastage, appear to have occurred largely in rural regions, such as Gedo, Lower Shabeli, Middle Juba, and the North West» (Ministry of Education, 1982-83: 19). The latter has the largest number of drop outs. The operation of its schools was somewhat complicated by authorities, for instance in 1984-85 academic year teaching was halted on a temporary basis. Furthermore, Government policy towards state schools in the North West and North East was both negative and ambiguous and became even more so but effectively after the 1977-78 war, to the detriment of the education system in these areas. For instance the Hargeysa Girls Intermediate and Secondary Boarding School, was first named Hawa and Aden School (co-education) and then changed to Youth Revolutionary Camp. «June 26» Secondary School was used as ward in 1977-78 and later into a refugee administration centre. Amoud Secondary School has been used as Ward in 1977 and later given to the Ministry of Agriculture. Dayaha Intermediate Boarding School is also used by the Ministry of Agriculture and is now a military camp. Burao Girls Intermediate and Elementary (Boarding School) has been changed into a boys boarding school. Co-education exists but girls must be day school students. In short, most previous secondary intermediate boarding school are used for multipurposes by other ministries other than that of the Education. Some new ones have opened in certain areas and are built on the basis of self-help schemes. Most pupils in the elementary schools have to bring their own chairs into the classrooms not to mention the shortages of text books and teachers. Consequently schools in the northern region have lost their popularity and students remain frustrated and disillusioned with the system. However, higher education has improved tremendously under the present government. In 1969, there was only the University Institute in Mogadishu that provided courses in law and economics. At the present the National University located in Mogadishu has about 11 different faculties: education/journalism, law, industrial chemistry, languages, medicine, economics, engineering, political sciences, agriculture, geology and veterinary science. Most of the faculties are run by Italians with the cooperation of Italian universities. The latter provide ex-patriate professors and technicians from Italy, as well as trained Somali post-graduates students in Italian universities. At the post-graduate level the Republic gets scholarships and fellowships from the outside world. For instance, in the year 1985-86 the British Overseas Development Agency provided £ 350,000 for technical cooperation training. The priorities of the programme were for training in support of UK Aid Projects in forestry, fisheries and tse-tse fly control and for the training of counterparts for Keil textbook production project. The programme is administered by the British Embassy in Mogadishu and by the Council in London. However the British Council used to offer scholarships to undergraduate students specifically the top stu-

dent from Sheikh, Amoud Secondary Schools and for further training to the teachers but that offer has been turned down by the Somali government. However at the request of the Somali government on key English language teaching (Keil), a programme has been in operation since 1980. Other countries that currently give training to Somali students are Egypt, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia (university) Doha, United Arab Emirates, USA, West Germany, Sweden, France.

Conclusion

Shortly after independence the system of education in the north and the south of the Republic remained different. The civilian governments that ruled the country in the '60s were calling for a uniformed system of education, but were in favour of English language as the medium of instruction from the intermediate stage onwards. There were not sufficient schools, but the standard of those that existed was by and large satisfactory and were numerically increasing. The strategic allocations of the boarding schools in the northern region was acute and subsequently improvements were made in both regions with the help of friendly countries. The state of the education in the Republic under the military rule is rather complicated. The Somali language was introduced as the medium of instruction. Thus the British system of education was uprooted from the north. National university was established and the Italian language has been contained. Enrollment has been expanded at the primary and secondary levels, therefore maximised the wastage of drop outs. Consequently, the quality of the education system was questioned and made those with better incomes seek education (for their children) overseas. Hence there is a new economic class distinction being mobilized in the Republic.

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