



# BASIC EDUCATION IN SOMALIA: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

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**Abstract—** The paper discussed the problems facing basic education in Somalia and proposes solutions. The article shows that the basic education budgets of the national and regional governments increase every year. However, the budget is only allocated for the management and educational policies, not for increasing the enrolment in basic education. The point of the article is that special consideration should be given to basic education. The study indicates that basic education in Somalia is very low and the number of children out of school is very high. The paper indicates that there are many problems confronting basic education in Somalia. Some of these are budget shortages, philosophical and curriculum problems, the shortage of qualified teachers, traditional teaching methods, and the decreasing literacy rate. The paper shows that overcoming these problems requires increasing the number of schools, mobilizing finance, privatization, education promotion, and community support.

**Key words:** Education, basic education, educational problems, solutions

## I. INTRODUCTION

There is no doubt that education has a role in the promotion of socio-economic progress (Ajayi & Ekundayo, 2008). The nation's growth and development is determined by its human resource (Abdulkareem, 2001; Ajayi & Ekundayo, 2008). Therefore, Basic education is important for human life. It is the first step in one's educational journey. In general, through education, we can change people and enable us to produce more educators that will contribute to the nation's development. Many researchers have mentioned the significance of primary education (part of basic education) and its role in both the private and social realms (Deninger, 2003; Kadzamira and Rose, 2003; Plank, 2007; İşcan et al., 2015). All communities recognize the importance of education, but there are many problems in terms of the quality of education and the rate of student enrolment. Sub-Saharan countries have the highest proportion of school-age children. Over a fifth of children between the ages of 6 and 11 are out of school, followed by a third of youth between the ages of 12 and 14. According to UIS data, almost 60% of youth between the ages of 15 and 17 are not in school (UNESCO, 2016)

Before Somalia attained independence, the British and Italians established some primary schools for their own agendas, which included the westernization of the children. At the time of independence, there were about 230 primary education canterers or schools. There were also 10 secondary schools consisting of general ordinary and teacher-vocational training (Eno et al., 2014). Basic education during the time of Mohamed Siyad Barre (1969–1991) has reached a high level compared to the different periods that Somalia has gone through. Since 1983, there has been a significant decline in basic education. Recent studies show Somalia has one of the lowest levels of basic education in the world (Unicef Somali, 2018).

## II. BASIC EDUCATION IN SOMALIA

Somalia is located in the Horn of Africa. It stretches from slightly south of the Equator northward to the Gulf of Aden and strategically located between sub-Saharan Africa and the countries of Arabia and south-western Asia. Somalia is bordered by the Indian Ocean in the East, Ethiopia in the West, the Gulf of Aden in the North, Djibouti in the North-West, and Kenya in the South. Somalia has a population of 12,316,895 (UNFPA/PESS, 2013) and an average life expectancy of about 56 years (World Bank, 2017). The Somali economy is based on the export of agriculture and livestock, frankincense, and fishing.

There is no agreed definition for education. The concept of education has witnessed changes in many ways for various reasons in terms of historical transformation of society and technology. Sofradzija et al. (2021, p. 57) defined education as "a process that happens both at the individual level of each human being and at the global level of total humanity, which has always been and never ceases to be in the process of education". Likewise, Johan and Harlan (2014) pointed out that education **is essential for human life**. In distinction to individual perspective, Bhardwaj & Assistant (2016) pointed out that education is important to bring confidence, ensure a bright future, contribute to character building, time management, and shape the value of a human being. In addition, education plays an important role in increasing the growth and productivity of the country. Kapur.A (2018) stresses that education plays a role in the development of society and the nation. He underlined that education grants



people good status, self-confidence, and development for the community.

Before Somalia gained its independence, the British administration and the Italian colonial government established some primary schools for their own agendas, which included the westernization of the children. Although these canter or schools provided educational services, Somali society refused to enrol their children. Colonial education marked the starting point for formal education, or modern education, in Somalia. This education was not unified due to the diversity of the curriculum. The Italian and British education systems in Somalia were very different. British education in the North consisted of three years of elementary school, four years of intermediate school, and four years of secondary school, and the parents or the external community were to pay some of the school tuition. In addition, the Italian education system in Somalia consisted of five years of elementary school, three middle or intermediate, and four secondary schools, while education was free. On the other hand, Somali intellectuals have established private schools in both parts, especially those graduated from the teacher training canter in the Arab Counties. They opened the Hargeisa Afternoon School in 1935, the Hargeisa School in 1936, and the Hamar Jajab and Falax schools in 1942. In 1944, the Somali Youth League (SYL) established some Arabic and Somali medium schools (Mohamamed M., 1992). The Somali community accepted it and showed impressive enrollment figures. The reason for this was their learning experiences, which were based on Somali cultural and social characteristics.

Somalia has experienced many educational systems. From 1960 up to 1969, the education system in Somalia was either civilian or democratic. The education system in this period faced many problems, particularly the unification of the Italian and British systems. During this time, the basic school has emerged. Eno et al.(2014) stated that at the time of the attainment of independence in 1960, the number of primary schools across the country was about 230, while the number of secondary schools was 10. The education system in this period was transformed from a democracy into a socialist system. This period is characterized by rapid literacy campaigns that targeted rural areas. Somali primary school education saw rapid development during the time of Mohamed Siyad Barre. The Somalis succeeded in writing using the Somali orthography in 1972(Abdi, 1998; Mohamamed M., 1992). Massive education campaigns were carried out; primary education schools as well as high education schools were constructed. Comprehensive teacher training programs were designed for the various levels of general and higher education. The enrollment of primary school students stood at 28,000 in 1970 and rose to 271,000 by 1982, with an institutional increase of 1407 by 1980, up from 287 schools in 1970, subsequently raising the number of teachers to a well-trained workforce (Bennars, Seif and Mwangi, 1996; Eno et al., 2014). After the war in Ethiopia, the allocation of large chunks of the national budget to support the war led to

inadequate funds in the education sector, hence reducing enrollment in schools. Because of that, many teachers moved to neighboring countries for better teaching opportunities, which further exacerbated the deteriorating quality of education in the country. Teachers are one of the most powerful forces for equitable access to quality education, and they form the backbone of global development.

In 1991, Somalia was engulfed in a devastating civil war. The war had affected all aspects of life, and the education sector was severely affected. Schools stopped functioning because of insecurity and lack of funding. After the fall of the government, Somali scholars opened more schools to fill the role of the government until 2000. Between 1991 and 2000, education in Somalia was very private and the government had no role in it. In contrast, public education, especially in some regions, has started. At the moment, the education system in Somalia is federal in character. Public primary and secondary education is in a nascent stage. There are many challenges and problems in the development of basic education in the country.

### III. PROBLEMS FACING BASIC EDUCATION IN SOMALIA

In general, education in Somalia faces complex challenges that greatly affect it. Hussein A. (2021) mentioned that among these challenges are poor school infrastructure, scarcity of public education, financial problems, poor language policies, and poor teacher training.

Budget shortages are one of the biggest challenges to education in the world. The allocation of funds for education is one of the most pressing challenges that are facing the education systems in many countries (Lovely & Oluwat, n.d.; Rashid, 2012). Somalia is one of the African countries that is facing a budget shortage. In spite of that, the education budget in Somalia has been increasing for the last few years. The total budget for all three ministries is \$80 million. The budget of the Ministry of Education of the federal government is \$29.1 million (Somali Public agenda, 2021). The budget for education in the Somaliland region is \$22.8 million (Bashiir, 2021), while in the Puntland region it is \$28 million. These budgets are based on the development of education policy and administration in the federal state and federal states. The following table shows the annual budgets of the federal government and the states.

Description	2021 budget
<b>Federal Government</b>	29,050,886 Million
<b>Puntland Regional State</b>	28,000,000 Million
<b>Somaliland</b>	22.8 Million

Except for a few budgets in the Federal government and Somaliland regions, the aforementioned budget is not



allocated for basic education development. No funds have been allocated for basic education except for the federal government, which provides for 47,000 students and 698 teachers and principals (MOECHE,2020) as well as the Somaliland administration, which allows a small budget for basic education. The aforementioned budget is earmarked for policy development and education management in the ministries.

The curriculum is the basis of any education system. It encompasses the education program and carries out the philosophical, psychological, social, and educational knowledge gained through it. Su (2012) sees the curriculum as a process of achieving educational goals. The curriculum is more related to the content. Moreover, the curriculum can be characterized as a process of selecting content or courses of study (Beauchamp, 2010; Su, 2012; Wood & Davis, 1978). The curriculum is associated with the teaching and learning activities. Tommy, 1984, cited by Su (2012), defined the curriculum as "a plan for teaching and instruction". Many researchers have seen the curriculum as documents which were written on a piece of paper by the authorities, both public and private (Barrow & Milburn, 1990; Brady, 1995; Su, 2012). Furthermore, the curriculum is more concerned about the learners' characteristics and students' performance. In recent years, the Somali government has made progress on the general education curriculum. The ministry of education has developed the national framework curriculum; textbooks have been distributed in 2018; and all the curriculum textbooks in basic education will be completed in 2020 (MECHE,2019 & 2020; Faqih.SH (2021). A lot of schools have implemented the new curriculum, but the government does not still have data for the schools using the textbooks as Faqih SH. (2021) indicated. On the other hand, Hussein A.(2021) noted that some member states have refused to implement the new government curriculum. In the comprehension of the curriculum, he indicated that educated Somalis and politicians frequently confuse curriculum, syllabi and textbooks. In the post-conflict society, the philosophy of education, which is part of the curriculum, is more necessary. The discussion of education experts in Somalia is not focused on the debate of the philosophy of education. Even Somali experts consider the general objectives of school or education. Besides, the new federal government curriculum is not tested on the ground, which can lead to failure in the educational process. The lack of a unified curriculum as well as a lack of implementation is one of the major challenges facing basic education in Somalia.

The shortage of qualified teachers is a national and international issue. It is the main problem that all the leaders in the world have plagued their minds and become the main problem facing today's schools (Daniel, 2015; Aragon, 2016). The countries that are recovering from war always have a shortage of qualified teachers because the teachers will be targeted by militants or gunners in the period of war. Hodgkin (2006) mentioned that 75% of Rwanda teachers in 1994 had been killed or been accused of taking part in the genocide.

Likewise, in 1991, many qualified teachers in Somalia were killed and others left for other countries. Due to the consequences of the war and a lack of institutionalized education system, Somalia suffered from a shortage of qualified teachers as well as a scarcity of teachers. (Hussein A.(2015) mentioned that Somalia is facing a serious teacher shortage at all levels of basic education. The shortages of teachers are found in two areas, which are the teacher-student ratio and the lack of subject teacher experts in the classroom. The ratio of teachers to students is very high at 1:40 :40 (NDP, 2020). Despite this, many critics have stated that the teaching profession in Somalia is unwelcome for intelligent students, and that they do not see it as a viable career option in the future, despite the fact that the youth unemployment rate is higher (IPID:Hussein,A.A,2021).

The lack of qualified teachers is an issue confronting basic education in Somalia. The quality of teachers is not very good, as is the quantity, which is very low. For instance, the quality of teachers has been called into question in the past few years as a factor, which has resulted in more than 8,000 students failing the national exam held by the Ministry of Education (three member states plus Banadir Region).

The other problem is related to the teaching and learning facilities. Most of Somalia's basic schools have acclimatized to traditional teaching approaches, and teachers do not use digital learning in the classroom. In Somalia, there is a demand for student-centered methods within the education system to make it more efficient.

Another problem that is facing basic education in Somalia is the low student numbers and decreasing literacy. Literacy has become a high priority on the development agenda over the past decades. The reports show that 750 million adults still lack basic reading and writing skills and almost 102 million of the illiterate population were between 15 and 24 years old (UIS FACT SHEET, 2017) Overall, literacy rates in Africa are very low. The literacy rates in Sub-Saharan Africa remain below 65% (UNESCO Report,2017; Shiundu, 2018). Somalia has one of the lowest literacy rates in Africa. The highest rates of literacy in Somalia have been achieved between 1972 and 1991. The Somali language has played a massive role in raising literacy in the country. Mass literacy rates have eroded from 5% to 55% (Laitin & Samatar, 1987; Abdi, 1998). Former Somali Minister of Education, Abdirahman Tahir, 2020 by HANOLATO Interview program indicated that the Somali literacy rate is 37% (Abdi.A.H, 2020) which means that 63% of Somali people are illiterate. The large number of illiterate people evidences the out-of-school students' number aged 6 to 9 by 22-30% (NDP, 2020). Likewise, according to Somali Education Cluster(2019)the number of illiterate children in Somalia is high, with 3 million out-of-school children. Unfortunately, there are no exact statistics about the number of students enrolled in primary and secondary schools in Somalia. Several international organizations working in the education system in Somalia have published data in parts of



Somalia. This data has an impact on the reality of education in Somalia.

#### IV. RECOMMENDATIONS ON IMPROVING THE STATUS OF BASIC EDUCATION IN SOMALIA

In general, the number of primary and secondary school students is very small. Three million Somali children do not go to school. Education budgets and government budgets are increasing every year, and no one is responsible for increasing the number of children in education. According to Minister Abdirahman Tahir, the estimated minimum cost per child needed in the school education system is \$300, which means the cost for the 3 million students needed is \$900 million suppose the government and all the local governments add 100 million annually to these students' accounts. Even so, they collaborate with the Somali communities and the international donors to receive an amount like this. In nine years, the government and all the members of the states will be able to educate all of these students. The government can develop a national plan for educating children in partnership with businesses, parents, and international organizations. The international community spends millions on education, and yet the crisis is far from over, with so many children missing education. Unfortunately, a lack of vision and planning has resulted in the illiteracy of thousands of children.

##### **Increasing the Number of Schools**

The school is a learning environment for students to learn. The purpose of the school is to provide a more effective environment for student development in mental, intellectual, cognitive, social, and other dimensions. School is the foundation of society's life in general and student life in particular.

Building a new school is crucial to fighting ignorance and finding a new generation of innovators in Somalia. For many young people who are at risk of becoming extremists, it creates a new light for life. Extremists are a global issue and are opposed to international and national security. Mohammadi (2021) underlined the importance of education in reducing extremism in Afghanistan. He underlined that education and schools in Afghanistan deserve more investment to curb extremism rather than the cost of fighting. Ultimately, it is necessary for the government to increase the number of schools and the proportion of those enrolled in primary education.

##### **Mobilizing Finances**

The finances of education are directly related to the quality, quantity, and efficacy of education. As Somalia recovers from conflict, all stakeholders must focus on mobilizing education resources. Financial resources are very important in this. The education or desired goals cannot be met unless the funds are allocated. The Somali government is increasingly focused on political stability and security rather than on the educational

system. While working on improving political stability and security, the Somali government and the local states must increase access and invest in basic education so that more children who are out of school can get an education.

##### **Privatization of Education**

Although much of Somalia's education is private, the number of students in school education is still very low. Private education is fundamental to the development of Somali society. Increasing the number of private schools can increase the number of students who benefit the whole community in Somalia. Public and private schools have also emerged in recent years around the world. Public and private schools have a number of reasons for their presence. According to Edwards et al (1985) cited by Hunt, F.J (1983), public and private schools have a number of reasons for their presence. They underlined that the decline in public enterprises and education has led to the emergence of public-private schools. On the other hand, privatization is more contrary to educational value and its purpose. However, private education schools are more needed in Somalia to increase the capacity of basic education. In any country, education is a basic need that leads to the socio-economic development of individuals and societies. There is a need to increase the number of schools and learning institutions to encourage interpersonal education. In Somalia, the enrollment rate in education is very low, especially in Basic education.

##### **Community mobilization**

Both the family and the school have traditionally been seen as institutions for the development of children. In addition, the community has received attention in recent years because of its impact on youth and student achievement, as well as their role in societal domains (Sanders, 2001). Community involvement is very important. The magnitude of the educational problems and the academic achievements require resources beyond the scope of the school and family (Heath and McLaughlin, 1987; Sanders, 2001).

In Somali society, as in traditional society, the element of support is the foundation of their lives. As a result, there are now many schools that are not public or private but community-owned schools. As more schools are maintained or built with community partnerships, basic schools can be built, but there is need for a clear vision and policy from the government at the federal and state levels. Finally, the community plays a huge role in supporting education in a country. The community can play a role in increasing enrollment in education in Somalia. Therefore, it is very important to mobilize the community to play an active role in promoting basic education.



## V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Basic education is important for human life. It is the first step in one's educational journey. This short article discussed basic education in Somalia: problems and solutions. Its main goal was to expose the state of basic education in Somalia and how to address its challenges. This article highlights that the lack of basic education is very high. The article stated that the literacy rate in Somalia is 37% and that the children's out-of-school aged 6–9 is around 22–30%. Meanwhile, 3 million Somali children are not attending school. Besides, the article concluded that budget shortages, educational philosophy and curriculum, a shortage of qualified teachers, and a high illiteracy rate are the biggest problems facing basic education in Somalia. The paper underlined that overcoming these problems requires increasing the number of schools, mobilizing finances, privatization, education promotion, and community support.

In this case, basic education in Somalia needs to be re-examined in terms of both quality and the increase in the quantity of children accessing education. In order to achieve this, the following issues need to be addressed:

- The government should pay attention to basic education and make it an important pillar of the country's policy.
- The government should establish a fund for out-of-school children's education.
- The education budget should be included in the annual basic education budget.
- The management of public schools should be strengthened to do their job in an excellent manner.
- Communities should be involved in the education of Somali children and should take part in mobilizing financial support.

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