

THE ROLE OF SOMALI SECONDARY SCHOOL  
CURRICULUM IN BUILDING STUDENTS'  
CITIZENSHIP AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

BY

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A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for  
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education

Kulliyyah of Education  
International Islamic University Malaysia

SEPTEMBER 2021

## ABSTRACT

Somalia is one of the most fiercely divided countries in the world. The people of Somalia face an identity crisis, as they have more than one identity (clan, national, and religion). In addition, the development of good Somali citizens is impeded by the absence of a nation to belong to, as there are clan-based states, a lack of clarity as to whether the country serves the needs of individuals or clans, and an absence of a feeling of obligation towards the nation. Thus, the present study aimed to investigate as to how education as a whole and the curriculum specifically, can build good citizens equipped with a national identity and a participative attitude. To do so, the study employed a quantitative methodology of positivism paradigm with a cross-sectional sample survey design. A total of 400 Somali students in their final year of secondary education participated in this study. The civic outcomes for this study were measured using good citizenship, national identity, and civic participation. The study found that there is no gender difference among participants in the selected civic outcomes. Similarly, the study demonstrated that parental education does not impact students' civic outcomes. Moreover, it was found that participants' educational aspirations influence the civic results; the lower the level of education, the lower the civic outcomes. Contrary to the literature, the study concluded that most of the participants had no interest in their nation's social and political issues. The study results also showed that the curriculum exposed to the students contributes towards the civic development of the students and equips them with good citizenship and national identity, and therefore paves the ways for proper civic participation in the future. These results have theoretical and practical implications for anybody working in education, particularly on curriculum specialists. Thus, the study recommends further research on the impact of the school and the teachers on students' civic outcomes in levels other than the study's target level. It also suggested an in-depth content analysis of the curriculum include any important civic topics that are currently missing in it and single-subject curriculum delivery and training civic teachers on contemporary civic issues for proper preparation of the future generation.

## خلاصة البحث

الصومال واحدة من أكثر دول العالم انقسامًا. يواجه شعب الصومال أزمة هوية، حيث يمتلك أكثر من هوية (عشيرة، قومية، ودين). بالإضافة إلى ذلك، فإن تنمية مواطنين صوماليين صالحين يعيقها عدم وجود دولة تنتمي إليها المواطن، حيث يوجد دول عشائرية، وعدم وضوح ما إذا كانت الدولة تخدم احتياجات الأفراد أو العشائر، وغياب الشعور بالالتزام تجاه الوطن. لذلك، تهدف هذه الدراسة الحالية إلى التحقيق في كيفية قيام التعليم ككل والمناهج الدراسية على وجه التحديد، ببناء مواطنين صالحين مجهزين بهوية ووطنية وموقف تشاركي. للقيام بذلك، استخدمت الدراسة منهجية كمية لنموذج الوضعية مع تصميم مسح عينة مقطعية. شارك في الدراسة ما مجموعه 400 طالب صومالي في السنة الأخيرة من التعليم الثانوي في هذه الدراسة. تم قياس النتائج المدنية لهذه الدراسة باستخدام المواطنة الصالحة والهوية الوطنية والمشاركة المدنية. وجدت الدراسة أنه لا يوجد فرق بين الجنسين في النتائج المدنية المختارة. وبالمثل، أوضحت الدراسة أن تعليم الوالدين لا يؤثر على النتائج المدنية للطلاب. علاوة على ذلك، وجد أن التطلعات التعليمية للمشاركين تؤثر على النتائج المدنية. فكلما انخفض مستوى التعليم، انخفضت النتائج المدنية. على عكس أدبيات التربية المدنية، خلصت الدراسة إلى أن معظم المشاركين لا يهتمون بالقضايا الاجتماعية والسياسية بلدهم. كما أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن المنهج المعروض على الطلاب يساهم في التنمية المدنية للطلاب ويزودهم بالمواطنة الصالحة والهوية الوطنية، وبالتالي يمهد سبل المشاركة المدنية المناسبة في المستقبل. هذه النتائج لها آثار نظرية وعملية لأي شخص يعمل في مجال التعليم، وخاصة على المتخصصين في المناهج. وبدلاً من ذلك، توصي الدراسة بمزيد من البحث حول تأثير المدرسة والمعلمين على النتائج المدنية للطلاب في مستويات أخرى غير المستوى المستهدف للدراسة. كما اقترحت تحليلاً متعمقاً لمحتوى المناهج الدراسية بما في ذلك أي موضوعات مدنية مهمة مفقودة حالياً وتقديم مادة التربية المدنية كمادة مستقلة وتدريب المعلمين المدنيين على القضايا المدنية المعاصرة من أجل الإعداد المناسب للجيل المستقبلي.

## APPROVAL PAGE

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that it has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degrees at IIUM or other institutions.

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*This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved mother Ardo Shire Muse, my late father*

*Hersi*

*Jama and my best brother Geeddi Hersi Jama (without him, I could not finish my PhD study) for the unrelenting support they have afforded me, and for being there through thick and thin. I salute my parents who instilled the foundation of great morals and values that brought me where I am today. Thank you for keeping track of my every move during the journey.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to praise and thank Allah SWT, the Almighty, who has granted countless blessings and everything to me, so that I have finally been able to accomplish this dissertation. There were times that my faith was the only thing that got me through. Thank you for the blessings of your favour upon my life. I have to acknowledge that the pursuit of my PhD journey is not a solo journey. The completion of this dissertation would not have become a reality without the invaluable support of several individuals.

First, I would like to convey my deepest gratitude to Prof. Dr. Dawood Abdulmalek Alhedabi, my respectful mentor for his wisdom and mentoring, as well as his willingness to counsel me, review my work, comment and advise and also for his patience, encouragement and very kind treatment. He provided me with extraordinary experiences throughout this dissertation. His leadership and dedication for teaching has set me an example I hope to follow someday. I am very proud to have had Prof. Dr. Dawood Abdulmalek Alhedabi as my supervisor. I am indebted to him more than he knows and will remember him forever. Also, I thank to my co. Supervisors Assoc. Prof. Dr. Suhailah Hussien and Dr. Mohamad Ridhuan Abdullah who were also my respectful mentors. Thank you very much for your support and guidance while I worked on my dissertation. It has been a privilege and a great honor to work under such knowledgeable and intuitive supervisors.

Moreover, many thanks go Prof. Dr. Sidek Bin Baba, Prof. Dr. Mohamad Sahari Nordin, and Prof. Dr. Rosnani Hashim, for their support. In addition to all the lecturers in the Kulliyah of Education, I would also like to thank all the staff in the Kulliyah of Education for their cooperation.

I want to thank my colleagues for their support and help. All of you are great friends. I would particularly like to acknowledge Popoola Kareem, I thank him for his support and friendship. He has helped me in ways that he might not even know. It would be very difficult to find adequate words to convey how much I owe these people.

The PhD journey would have not been completed without the unconditional love and unfailing encouragement, faith, sacrifices and prayers of my family. My heartfelt thanks go to my beloved parents, the Ardo Shire Muse, late Hersi Jama, and my best brother Geeddi Hersi Jama for the unrelenting support they have afforded me, and for being there through thick and thin. I salute my parents who instilled the foundation of great morals and values that brought me where I am today. Thank you for keeping track of my every move during the journey. Moreover, my brother Geeddi has been central to my completion of this journey. His complete and unconditional support is always carried with me at all times. Without him, this dissertation would never have been written. Lots of love and gratitude goes to my beloved wives, brother and for their uncounted and continuous love, continuous care, encouragement, and support for me. May Allah reward and help them all.



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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CCE	Civic and Citizenship Education
CEPS	Citizenship Education Policy Study
CivED	The Civic Education Study
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
EPPI	Evidence for Policy and Practice Information
ICCS	International Civic and Citizenship Education Studies
IEA	Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
MAR	Missing At Random
NFD	Northern Frontier District
SSDF	Somalia Salvation Democratic Front
SNM	Somali National Movement
USC	United Somali Congress

# **CHAPTER ONE**

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

Somalia is situated in the horn of Africa, which borders the Gulf of Aden, the Indian Ocean, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Djibouti. By ethnicity, language and culture, Somalia is not as it appears in the modern geographical world map. Rather the colonizers divided Greater Somalia into five regions, namely; British, Italian, French (Djibouti), the Northern Frontier District (NFD) and the Ogaden region of the Ethiopian Empire (Farah, 2009). Therefore, the Somali speaking people in the wider Horn of Africa populate an area of about 400,000 square miles and form one of the largest ethnic groups in Africa (Khayre, 2016; Kibble, 2001). In addition, Farah (2009) notes that Somali people dwell, not only in the recognized Somali state, but that they also live beyond that border in places like Djibouti, northern Kenya and Ethiopia.

The country gained independence in 1960 in which the Italian region and a single region from the three British colonies combined together to form what is now currently known to be Somalia. In 1961, the country implemented a nationwide referendum that resulted in the adoption of the first national constitution that began a new democratic political system within the country. This is considered to be the first peaceful power transfer in the history of the African continent (Khayre, 2016). However, a military coup, led by Mohamed Siad Barre, deconstructed the democracy in its infancy and began a dictatorship socialist government which ruled the country for almost three decades. During this period the country experienced high civil unrest and anarchy (Country Watch, 2016).

Somalia occupies around 637,657km<sup>2</sup> of land, of which 13% is arable, and 3333km of coastline which is considered to be the longest coastline in Africa (Kudonoo, 2016). It is not an easy task to quote the exact population of Somalis as there has not been a reliable population census since 1983 and therefore, international organizations such as the World Bank and UN are the only sources of data available and provide different population numbers. For example in 2008, UNICEF estimated the population of Somalis to be around 9.3 million, while the World Bank estimated it at 10.2 million in 2009 (Kudonoo, 2016) and these differences raise the question of the reliability of these sources. Khayre (2016) mentions that UNPF's estimation of the population is around 12,316,895 million. In addition, the author notes that there exist around 8 million Somali speaking and Somali ethnic people living in Kenya and Ethiopia. Moreover, Lindley (2005) expresses that there are huge numbers of Somalis and their children that migrated to neighbouring countries and to western countries. The author notes that it is not possible to know the exact population of Somalis living outside the country but are estimated to be over one million, scattered throughout every continent in the world. Similarly, Dahre (2012) states that around one to two million Somalis live in countries nearby Somalia. However, some recent publications mention that people of Somali descent are estimated to be more than 20 million and live in Somalia, Kenya, Ethiopia and Djibouti. In addition to this, there are at least one million Somalis living in Europe and North America (Abdullahi, 2017).

From 1988 to 1990, the country experienced political tensions from which several rebellion armed groups, such as the Somalia Salvation Democratic Front (SSDF), Somali National Movement (SNM) and United Somali Congress (USC), were formed and entered into bloody confrontation with the government and overthrew it in 1991 (Ingiriis & Hoehne, 2014). Consequently, thousands of lives

were lost in the civil war and many others were injured, physically and mentally, and nearly one million people fled from the country and became refugees (Ingiriis & Hoehne, 2014). The civil war and destruction of all social service institutions made Somalia one of the poorest countries around the globe and turned people, who were once of the same nation, against each other (Cummings & Van Tonningen, 2003). Since the civil war, Somalia has no functioning central government and has experienced the longest stateless governance compared to all the other countries in the world (Abdullahi, 2017; Menkhaus, 2014). Although dozens of conflict reconciliation conferences and peacekeeping talks were held, none resulted in any form of agreement to create a strong government and long lasting peace within the country (Menkhaus, 2007).

## **1.2 POLITICAL SYSTEM**

According to Farah (2017), in the pre-colonial period, Somalia utilised some sort of traditional rule and in some parts of the country, kingdoms and Sultanates connected Somalia to the Great Ottoman Empire and Zanzibar Sultanate. Moreover, Somali communities implemented legal system which acted as the legal basis of their political affairs. This system, known in the local language as *Xeer*, was used as the legal reference by which disputes and conflicts were settled (Khayre, 2016) and was to a great extent reliable, as it prevented the communities from inference and dominance over others. However, the colonizing powers forcibly implemented an alien legal system and arbitrarily preferred some clans over others by giving these specific clans opportunities to rule. This notion of clan dominance still exists in all administrations that rule the country today (Khayre, 2016).

By nature, Somalis are nomadic pastoralist communities who live in rural areas and are deeply divided into clans and sub-clans. This system of clans infiltrates into the political system of the country and thus, dominates all political aspects such as government joints and political parties which establishes a struggle between the different clans competing for power. Consequently, this led other clans to protest which kindled the civil war that had been building momentum since 1978 (Abdullahi, 2017). Lindley (2005) points out that Somalis descend from the same ancestry, who were hugely nomadic people that did not settle regularly but despite their homogeneity in terms of ethnicity, culture, language, and religion (Kibble, 2001), Somalis are considered to be the most divided society in Africa as a result of clan dominance (Browne & Fisher, 2013).

According to Beswick (2001) and Menkhaus (2014), Somalia is considered to be a symbol of state failure in both international peacekeeping operations and within the postcolonial African states. Similarly, Abdullahi (2017) and Menkhaus (2014) state that Somalia has experienced the most extended failure of state in the modern world despite it being one of the earliest countries in Africa to implement a peaceful transition of power during its postcolonial period. This was due to the presence of several factors that potentially eased the process such as common ethnicity, language and religion. However, after a long period of chaos and instability, the country has stepped into a new stage of peace, stability and recovery, which may presumably mark the end of the political transition since 1978 (African Development Bank, 2013).

According to Avis & Herbert (2016), Somalia's fragility is attributed to “clannism, poor governance, resource competition, militarisation, regional disputes, colonialism, and international involvement” (p. 14). This produced a system of

governance that appears to be a government of national unity, on paper, but is in fact a coalition of a small number of clans and factions (Menkhaus, 2007).

### **1.3 EDUCATION SYSTEM**

As an Islamic country, Islamic education and institutions were predominantly spread over the country before the colonial powers conquered the country. The colonizers (Britain and Italy) introduced formal education systems to the country (Abdi, 1998; Cassanelli & Abdikadir, 2007). A Somali child normally joins a Quranic school before the formal schooling system and thus, learns the Arabic script, for purpose of reading and writing the Holy Qur'an, before even formally learning the local language (Dammak, Eno, Mweseli, & Eno, 2014). This idea was invented as a prevention strategy for students who were joining the colonial education, so that "carrabka (the tongue) and caqliga (the mind) were initially trained to have a formal commitment to the faith" (Dammak et al., 2014, p. 22).

Bennaars, Seif, & Mwangi (1996) state that the education in Somalia has historically gone through three stages of education; traditional, colonial and post-colonial. The traditional education system, which was semi-informal and mainly related to religious and the cultural values, was often mobile, flexible and tailored to the needs of the nomadic community. This system of traditional education was implemented in the Qur'anic schools and persisted for many years and still widely exists within the country. The colonial education system was a type of formal schooling invented in the country when colonizers conquered the country in 1930 and was limited, in terms of coverage and size and was focused on producing workers for the colonizers. The Somali communities of the time opposed this educational system as it was against their culture and social values. The post-colonial education system

was initialised by the handover of 223 primary and 12 secondary schools, mainly in the big cities, from the colonizer to the Somali government (Cassanelli & Abdikadir, 2007). This infrastructure was not fully utilized as the communities perceived the schooling system to be foreign education and not relevant to their way of life (Dammak et al., 2014).

According to Abdi (1998), the pre-colonial education system was an informal community-based system and the colonisation of the country in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century formed the formal schooling education of the country. In the post-colonial period, the colonial education system was combined with the Arabic medium of instruction at the elementary years ( first four years) and transitioned to the English medium thereafter (Goodwin, 1966).

As a result of the collapse of the central government in 1991, almost all the public materials in schools were looted, and the public infrastructure was destroyed. By 1994, school enrolment had reached its lowest point due to most, if not all, schools having been destroyed, unavailable teaching material and teachers and student abandoning education (Cummings & Van Tonningen, 2003). Despite these challenges, the Somali community tried to fill the role of the collapsed government, but the absence of government and lack of co-ordination and integration resulted in the implementation of different curricula of different backgrounds (A. S. A. Hussien, 2015) which illuminates the catastrophic circumstances of the education system in Somalia.

The education system of the country crumpled in 1991 but because it is a corner stone of society, Somalis revived their education system despite the numerous obstacles and the limited capabilities of the society. The circumstance dictated that the provision of education was only possible through private ownership and management

(African Development Bank, 2013), and through the cooperation of the communities, external donors and the Somali Diaspora the primary and secondary schools were rehabilitated (African Development Bank, 2013) and re-established in the country.

Currently, the level of education in Somalia is very low, compared to neighbouring countries, and has a literacy rate of only 19% and primary school enrolment rate of 33% with a high gender gap of 23% for girls and 42% for boys (Mohamed & Ongubo, 2016). This is in part due to the fact that more than 73% of the population cannot afford the mandatory school fees (Khalifa, Bashir-Ali, Abdi, & Witherspoon Arnold, 2014). In addition, the literacy rate is about 37.8% with high gender disparity and around 50% of the male are literate while it is twice below this number in the female literacy (Country Watch, 2016, p. 260). In that, the adult literacy in the country is around 24%. As a result, Somalia is considered to have one of the lowest adult literacy rates in the world (African Development Bank, 2013; Mohamed & Ongubo, 2016).

Although there has been noticeable recovery of stability and peace, and a remarkable development in the education service, the education sector is underserved by the federal government and state administrations. Education at all levels is privately managed, and therefore parents have to pay for their children's education but due to widespread poverty the country has one of the lowest enrolment rates with only 30% enrolled into primary and 26% enrolled into secondary level (Education cluster, 2017).