



The Education We Need:
**Addressing Challenges in Curriculum,
Teaching, Assessment & Administration**

August 2021

Contents

1. Executive Summary	4
2. Introduction	5
3. Curriculum Development	6
4. Teacher Development	9
5. Assessment and Evaluation	11
6. Administration of Education	13
7. Conclusions	17
8. Policy Recommendations	18

About the Author

Abdullahi A. Hussein, PhD

Dr Hussein holds a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education from UCL's Institute of Education (IOE), United Kingdom. Dr Hussein's research expertise and interests are in the areas of higher education, curriculum and teacher development. Dr Hussein has published widely and produced peer-reviewed and policy papers, a book, and a book chapter. He is a Fellow of the Heritage Institute.

Copyright © 2021 | The Heritage Institute for Policy Studies, All Rights Reserved.

Readers are encouraged to reproduce material for their own publications, as long as they are not being sold commercially. As copyright holder, the Heritage Institute for Policy Studies requests due acknowledgement and a copy of the publication. For online use, we ask readers to link to the original resource on the HIPS website.

© Heritage Institute for Policy Studies 2021.

1. Executive summary

Somalia is facing two broad educational challenges: access and quality. The overwhelming majority of school-aged Somali children do not have access to basic education. This has security implications as children who do not attend school can be targeted for recruitment by extremist groups. For those who do go regularly to school, the quality of education is poor.

“
The overwhelming majority of school-aged Somali children do not have access to basic education. This has security implications as children who do not attend school can be targeted for recruitment by extremist groups

This report examines the issues of administration and quality and offers policy recommendations aimed at facilitating the speedy implementation of the recent agreement between the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS) and Federal Member States (FMS) on education. Using literature, the study also presents best practices that are used to tackle the challenges identified. In this regard, the report focused on curriculum content, teacher development, assessment and education administration.

On the curriculum challenges, the report argues that Somalia is missing a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to reshape its education system to ensure that it addresses social ills while simultaneously responding to the developmental challenges for the 21st century. The study found there is a need to define the country's educational objectives and recommends the speedy implementation of the recently agreed Curriculum and Teaching Qualifications Council led by a technical team in charge of reviewing and reforming the curriculum.

Somalia is facing teacher shortages as the profession is poorly paid and not attractive to graduates. The research calls for the standardisation and regulation of teacher training and pay. It also calls on the education authorities to launch an awareness campaign aimed at positively changing society's negative attitudes towards the teaching profession.

The study also reports on a series of challenges in the areas of assessment and evaluation. It points out that Somalia does not have a centralised assessment and evaluation unit. The integrity of school certificates hinges on having reliable and valid examination system with clear objectives and standards. The research urges the authorities to prioritize the establishment of a national board for assessment and evaluation run by specialists. It further calls for moving away from labelling students as 'failures' in exit exams.

On federalism and education, contradictory articles in the provisional constitution on the roles of the FGS and the FMS have led to constant disagreements. The study points to the need for a clear division of power and responsibilities between the FGS and the FMS on education.

The process of allocating some of the education powers and responsibilities to a lower level of administration is broadly referred to as decentralisation. Based on the literature, this report discusses four common models of decentralisation: deconcentration, delegation, devolution and privatisation. The literature identifies four types of educational provisions that can be decentralised: organisation of instruction, personnel management, planning and structures and resources. Due to the lack of empirical data, the study does not focus on one decentralised model but instead calls for further research.

2. Introduction

In the summer of 2020, Somalia saw an unprecedented level of debate on education among policymakers, civil society and ordinary citizens. Although the COVID-19 pandemic was sweeping the world and the country was in election mode, Somalis found time to engage in a not-seen-before level of debate on education. The dialogue resulted in an agreement between the federal government and member states in Garowe in July 2021 on key areas such as curriculum, assessment and the administration of education. The FGS and the FMS agreed to form a consultative council on education, establish a common curriculum framework and create an independent assessment body that would be responsible for the national exams and certificates.



The FGS and the FMS agreed to form a consultative council on education, establish a common curriculum framework and create an independent assessment body that would be responsible for the national exams and certificates

For years, education has been a contentious issue between the FGS and the FMSs. However, two major issues in 2020 intensified the debate. First, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education released new textbooks for secondary schools.² This represented a major step towards unifying the school syllabi around Somalia but highlighted the disagreement between states such as Puntland and the federal government on education matters. Puntland’s Ministry of Education insisted that it had not been consulted on the development and content of the new textbooks—a charge that the federal government disputed. Consequently, the new textbooks were not distributed in Puntland. Second, the secondary school exam results of all regions except Puntland were released in the summer of 2020. The exam results were controversial and led to a serious debate on the reliability of the results in a country that does not have a unified curriculum.

² Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education (2020). War-saxaafadeed/press-release. Available at: <https://moe.gov.so/wasaaradda-waxbarashada-hiddaha-iyo-tacliinta-sare-ee-xfs-oo-maanta-soo-bandhigtay-natiijada-imtixaanka-shahaadiga-ah-ee-fasalka-12aad-ee-dugsiga-sare/>



The key educational challenges in Somalia can be grouped into two broad themes: access and quality

The key educational challenges in Somalia can be grouped into two broad themes: access and quality. It is estimated that 70% of school-aged children do not have access to school.³ This impacts the economic and social development of the country and represents a security threat as these children could be an easy target for recruitment by extremist groups. This study recognises the importance of providing education to all children regardless of their gender, disability, social status or location. However, given that recent reports of the Heritage Institute have addressed the access issue, this study focuses on the administration and quality-related challenges.

The research divides those challenges into four types: curriculum (including curriculum content), teacher development, assessment and evaluation and federalism and education. It uses existing literature to identify best practices for addressing and overcoming these issues and also provides policy recommendations.

3. Curriculum Development

Quality education begins with a balanced curriculum. A curriculum consists of different yet interlinked components such as educational philosophy, content (syllabus), teacher development and assessment and evaluation.⁴ However, Somalis, even the educated class and politicians, refer to textbooks and syllabuses as the curriculum. Important issues such as educational philosophy or the direction of education rarely feature in the debate, even though curriculum specialists have long considered that defining the purpose of school/education is the first step a curriculum developer should take.⁵ The educational philosophy sets the direction for the curriculum and indicates what should be emphasized.



Curriculum reform is another critical issue that rarely captures the attention of policymakers in Somalia. The curriculum is not static. It must be consistently revised to make it relevant and reflect the needs of society

Curriculum reform is another critical issue that rarely captures the attention of policymakers in Somalia. The curriculum is not static. It must be consistently revised to make it relevant and reflect the needs of society. Researchers have reported that reforming a curriculum by setting a new direction is one of the first steps that a government takes once a country emerges from a conflict.⁶ The hidden message “never again” is always kept in mind. Rwanda, for example, implemented a new education policy after the genocide that focused on the similarities among all Rwandans rather than their differences, “focusing on a progressive future driven by the traditional values of ubumwe (unity, solidarity) and ubupfura (nobility, goodness, courage and respect for ancestors).”⁷

3 Wheeler, D.K. (1967). Curriculum Process. London: University of London Press Ltd.

4 Tyler, R.W. (1949). Basic principles of curriculum and instruction. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

5 Taba, H. (1962). Curriculum Development: Theory and Practice. USA: Harcourt, Brace and World Inc.

6 Sinclair, (2010). 'Protecting through curriculum: A call for collaboration' In Protecting Education From Attacks: A State-of-the-Art Review, 279-301. Paris: UNESCO. Available at: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001867/186732e.pdf>

7 Obura, A. (2003). Never Again: Educational Reconstruction in Rwanda. Paris, International Institute for Education Planning: UNESCO

Significant events such as the USSR launch of Sputnik I and the September 11th attacks in the United States have led to unprecedented curriculum reform at the international level. The launch of Sputnik I in 1957 demonstrated the superiority of the USSR system of education over that of the US. This led to debate and soul searching among American policymakers and academics that resulted in the complete overhaul of the US educational system which began to emphasise science, technology, mathematics and engineering (STEM) subjects.⁸ The USSR space success resulted in immediate educational legislation and changed educational theory and practice in the US.⁹



Furthermore, these reforms were motivated by the belief that “education is one of the most effective ways of strengthening values of peace, tolerance, pluralism, dialogue and human rights, all of which foster coexistence

More recently, the September 11th terrorist attacks also led to education reforms in the Muslim world. These reforms were intended to promote “pluralism, dialogue, citizenship and coexistence as tools to fight extremism”¹⁰ in curricula in Arab and Muslim countries.¹¹ Furthermore, these reforms were motivated by the belief that “education is one of the most effective ways of strengthening values of peace, tolerance, pluralism, dialogue and human rights, all of which foster coexistence”¹² and that education is an agent for peacebuilding and an effective tool for fighting extremism.¹³

The calls for educational reforms in the Muslim world were led by international bodies, such as “the European Union (EU), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).”¹⁴ Consequently, countries across the Muslim world undertook curriculum reforms. In 2005, for example, Saudi Arabia launched a \$2.4 billion education reform project commonly known as Tatweer.¹⁵ The Tatweer education reform was reportedly based on neoliberal ideology and led to a new context of education delivery in Saudi Arabia.¹⁶

Nothing we have seen so far suggests that successive governments in Somalia have given due consideration to serious curriculum reform initiatives. This can partially be explained by the fragile security situation which has been the primary focus of most policymakers. Although Somalia is no longer in the midst of a civil war, it is not yet in a peaceful place and a significant part of the country is controlled by Al-Shabaab. In the regions controlled by the Somali government, education services are primarily provided by the private and voluntary sectors.

8 Cha, H. (2015). Soviet Launch of Sputnik: Sputnik-Inspired Educational Reform and Changes in Private Returns in America. Dissertation for the degree of PhD, Clemson University.

9 Worner, J.W.V. (1976). Sputnik and American Education. Dissertation for the degree of PhD, Michigan State University.

10 Abu-Nimer, M., And Nasser, I. (2017). Building peace education in the Islamic educational context. *International Review of Education*, 63 (2).

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid

13 Elmi, A. (2010). *Understanding the Somalia Conflagration: Identity, political Islam and peacebuilding*. London and New York, NY: Pluto Press.

UNESCO (2017). Preventing violent extremism through education: A guide for policy-makers. Available at: <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247764>.

14 Abu-Nimer, M., And Nasser, I. (2017). Building peace education in the Islamic educational context. *International Review of Education*, 63 (2).

15 Tayan, B. (2017). The Saudi Tatweer Education Reforms: Implications of Neoliberal Thought to Saudi Education Policy. *International Education Studies*, 10(5).

16 Wiseman, A., Astiz, M., & Baker, D. (2013). Globalization and comparative education research: Misconceptions and applications of neo-institutional theory. *Journal of Supranational Policies of Education*, (1), 31-52.

This does not necessarily mean that Somali governments have done nothing to address education. Indeed, the last three governments have all taken small but positive steps towards providing basic education to Somalis and exercising their authority on education. For example, a curriculum framework and educational policy have been developed, although they have not yet been published. The administration of President Mohamed Abdullahi Farmaajo has also taken an important step towards producing a unified syllabus for primary and secondary schools. However, the textbooks were rejected by Puntland on the basis that its views were not included when the new syllabus was being developed. Consequently, the new syllabus was implemented in the four remaining members states as well as the Banadir region.

“
Generally, a post-civil war situation is an important opportunity for a country to implement wholesale curriculum reform. Somalia has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reform its education system

Generally, a post-civil war situation is an important opportunity for a country to implement wholesale curriculum reform. Somalia has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to reform its education system. The new curriculum should aim to address and overcome the social malaise of the nation while simultaneously responding to the developmental challenges of the 21st century. Clearly defining the vision, mission and ultimate objectives of education is the first step in this process.

The newly agreed upon curriculum council should lead the process with full and active participation by all stakeholders. Defining educational objectives is arguably a significant matter as Somalia has always had a narrow educational focus. For instance, before the country gained its independence and before the formation of the Somali state, formal education was provided by colonial administrations—the British in the north and the Italians in the south. The educational system was limited in its scope and delivery, and its objectives were limited to producing lower-level clerical staff for the colonial administrations.¹⁷ Furthermore, this new educational system arguably laid the foundation for a challenge in the medium of instruction which the country is still facing. As of today, the language policy remains a contested matter despite many attempts to settle the argument once and for all.¹⁸

The military regime that came to power in 1969 through a coup left its marks on the educational system. The new government adopted the Somali language with Latin script as the medium of instruction in all schools¹⁹ —with the exception of a few schools that used Arabic. The implementation of a national curriculum significantly increased the literacy rate, professionalized teacher training and established higher education institutions and vocational centers. The government also focused on adult education. However, the military government’s system of education was far from perfect. The curriculum had a narrow focus with limited pedagogical approaches. Teaching was primarily based on rote learning, or what scholars referred to as the banking-style of education.²⁰ Moreover, in later years, the system suffered chronic underfunding, corruption and nepotism.²¹

17 Abdi, A. (1998). Education in Somalia: History, destruction, and calls for reconstruction. *Comparative Education*, 34(3), 327-340.

18 Hussein, A. (2016). Challenges in curriculum and language of instruction in post-conflict Somalia. In Izarali, M. R., O. Masakure & E. Shizha (Eds.), *Security, Education and Development in Contemporary Africa*, Routledge, London.

19 Andrzejewski, B.W. (1974). The introduction of a national orthography for Somalia. *African Language Studies* 15, 199–203.

20 Freire, P. (1972). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. London: Sheed and Ward.

21 Abdi, A. (1998). Education in Somalia: History, destruction, and calls for reconstruction. *Comparative Education*, 34(3), 327-340.



The moto that characterised the education objective for the period was: ‘put down the guns, pick up the pen’

With the collapse of the central government in 1991, the education system entered a new phase. In the absence of a central government, NGOs provided all education services.²² The moto that characterised the education objective for the period was: ‘put down the guns, pick up the pen’. However, in the absence of a central government and a national curriculum, the unintended consequences of leaving education in the hands of individuals led to the largest curricular importation ever witnessed anywhere in the world. Education activists and providers of educational services, with good intentions, engaged in a mass importation of curricula from all corners of the world and in different languages. There were so many that no one knows the exact number of curricula that were imported into Somalia.



In 2004, Somalia adopted a new federal system and began a new chapter in its educational history. The previous periods had limited educational objectives

In 2004, Somalia adopted a new federal system and began a new chapter in its educational history. The previous periods had limited educational objectives. This practice continues to the current federal system as national educational objectives and policy are not publicly articulated yet. While a post-conflict situation offers an opportunity for reshaping education, it also presents challenges including whether or not to teach history.²³ Countries like Rwanda took the drastic decision to suspend the teaching of history as part of curriculum reform.²⁴ Again, so far, a serious debate on teaching history has not taken place in Somalia, yet this is an important discussion that requires the participation of all key stakeholders.

There are many curriculum-related challenges in Somalia, and this policy report cannot list all of them. However, we believe that redefining the educational philosophy, ensuring that the content reflects the nation’s needs, and establishing an effective curriculum board are the priorities. The latest agreement between the FGS and the FMSs is important and should be welcomed. Setting up a curriculum council is a small but important step towards developing a world-class curriculum.

4. Teacher Development



Developing a world class curriculum that addresses the country’s 21st century needs is not sufficient without developing and implementing an effective teacher training program for schools

Teachers are an important component of the education system. Developing a world class curriculum that addresses the country’s 21st century needs is not sufficient without developing and implementing an effective teacher training program for schools. Any training program should address the pre-service and in-service training needs of teachers and should be developed alongside the curriculum content. The educational objectives must also guide the content of the training program. Moreover, all teachers must be trained based on the new education objectives.

Teacher shortages, unattractive pay and inadequate training are among the major challenges. Shortages of qualified teachers in STEM subjects are often a challenge, even in developed countries.²⁵ An insufficient number of male teachers in some countries, particularly in the Gulf countries, is an example of a teacher shortage.²⁶

22 Cassanelli, L., & Abdikadir, F.S. (2008). Somalia: Education in transition. *Bildhaan*, 7(1), 91-125

23 Cole, E., and Barsalou, J. (2006). *Unite or Divide? The Challenges of Teaching History in Societies Emerging from Violent Conflict*. Special report. Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace.

24 Sinclair, M. (2002). *Planning Education In and After Emergencies*. Paris, International Institute for Educational Planning: UNESCO.

25 Hutchinson, L. V. (2012). Addressing the STEM Teacher Shortage in American Schools: Ways to Recruit and Retain Effective STEM Teachers. *Journal Action in Teacher Education*, 34 (5-6), 541-550, DOI: 10.1080/01626620.2012.729483.

Smith, E. (2010). Is there a crisis in school science education in the UK? *Educational Review*, 62 (2), 189-202, DOI: 10.1080/00131911003637014

26 Mansour, N. And Al-Shamrani, S. (2015). *Science Education in the Arab Gulf States: Visions, Sociocultural Contexts and Challenges*. Sense Publishers.

“
Despite the high number of unemployed youth in the country, the teaching profession is not a career choice for the nation’s brightest students

In Somalia, there is a lack of qualified teachers in almost all subjects which is a legacy of the country’s civil war.²⁷ All countries that go through civil wars experience a shortage of teachers because teachers become victims or perpetrators of war, as reported in Rwanda where “75 per cent of teachers in 1994 were either killed or are now in jail for alleged participation in the genocide.”²⁸ Somalia is not an exception. The lack of qualified teachers in the country is well documented.²⁹ Despite the high number of unemployed youth in the country, the teaching profession is not a career choice for the nation’s brightest students.³⁰ As reported in a previous HIPS study, teachers no longer enjoy the high status in the society that they once occupied.

Historically, teaching was a highly regarded role in society and teachers often assumed an informal role of parental responsibility. However, this is no longer the case. “If you even say that they will get their degree in teaching for free, it will still not be popular. They prefer subjects like nursing, medicine and engineering.”³¹ The HIPS’ report further added that “every parent wants to find a good teacher for their children in schools and universities, but they do not want their children to become teachers.”³²

“
Teaching is a stressful yet rewarding profession. It is imperative that their pay is standardised and regulated, especially in the private sector

Teaching is not a well-paid profession. In fact, Somali teachers do not receive a living wage³³ and there is no salary structure. It is not uncommon to find that two teachers with similar experience in the same school are being paid a different salary. Since many of the schools in the country are privately run, school administrators decide what to pay teachers. Moreover, there are no professional teacher associations that campaign for the welfare of teachers. Teaching is a stressful yet rewarding profession.³⁴ It is imperative that their pay is standardised and regulated, especially in the private sector.

Teaching is a profession, and teachers need the necessary skills, knowledge and training to do their job effectively. Like any other profession, teachers need systematic training before being allowed in a classroom and regular training while on the job so they can stay up-to-date on the latest pedagogical developments, knowledge and skills in their field. The importance of training teachers cannot be understated. Their training and qualifications make a difference in terms of students’ academic performance.³⁵ Studies from across the globe continue to demonstrate the difference training makes in both teachers doing their jobs and the students’ academic achievement.³⁶ Given that teachers are the agents entrusted with transmitting knowledge and skills to pupils, the quality of their training is essential.

27 World Bank. (2002). Rebuilding the civil service in a post- conflict setting: key issues and lessons of experience. World Bank, Washington, DC.

28 Hodgkin, (2006). Reconciliation in Rwanda: Education, History and the State. Journal of International Affairs, 60 (1).

29 Hussein, A. (2015). Educational challenges in post-transitional Somali: case study Mogadishu. Heritage Institute for Policy Studies, Mogadishu, Somalia. Available at: http://www.heritageinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Educational-challenges-in-post-transitional-Somalia_ENG.pdf

30 Ibid.

31 Ibid

32 Ibid

33 Ibid.

34 Maphalala, M.C., (2014). The Manifestation of Occupational Stress in the Teaching Profession: The Unheeded Voices of Teachers. Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences, 5(1), 77-88.

35 Nghambi, G.H. (2014). Factors contributing to poor academic performance in certificate of secondary education examination for community secondary schools in Urambo district, Tabora, Tanzania. Dissertation for the degree of PhD, University of Tanzania.

36 Ibid.



The high number of unqualified teachers should be of concern to all parents, educators and policymakers

Although there is no reliable data on the exact number of qualified teachers in Somali schools, an official in the Ministry of Education who was interviewed for this study pointed out that only about 30% of teachers have received some training. If this is confirmed, the high number of unqualified teachers should be of concern to all parents, educators and policymakers. No doubt many of these unqualified teachers have good intentions and do their best to be effective in their job, but they should be helped by equipping them with the necessary qualification to improve their teaching practices.

5. Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment and evaluation are crucial parts of the teaching and learning process. Educationalists have identified different types of assessments and typologies for evaluation, which cannot be all presented in this report.³⁷ Broadly, assessments and evaluations have the same ultimate objective which is to improve the teaching and learning process. However, they are different in their scope and functions. This can be seen in the definitions of the two terms. For instance, IBE-UNESCO defined assessment as “the process through which the progress and achievements of a learner or learners are measured or judged in compliance with specific quality criteria.”³⁸ The purpose of the assessment is to improve. However, educationalists have defined evaluation as the process of making a judgement or determining the quality or worth about an object, subject or phenomenon.³⁹



A good test or exam should possess not only validity and reliability but also objectivity, comprehensiveness, discriminating power, practicability, comparability and utility.

Public exams or exit exams are an important part of the assessment and evaluation process. They assess and evaluate the students’ academic achievement as well as the effectiveness of the instructor’s teaching methods and the curriculum in general. Some educationalists questioned the usefulness of exit exams for predicting future success in life and employment.⁴⁰ However, exit exams remain a common educational practice across the globe, and they are often managed by an exam board.⁴¹ A public examination should fit the purpose for which it is intended and have a high level of integrity and transparency.⁴² A good test or exam should possess not only validity and reliability but also objectivity, comprehensiveness, discriminating power, practicability, comparability and utility.⁴³ Exam systems that meet these characteristics are likely to facilitate public confidence including that of potential employers and higher education institutions.

37 McAlpine, M. (2002). Principles of Assessment. Glasgow: University of Luton. Available at: <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.137.3942&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

38 IBE- UNESCO (2017a). Prototype of a National Curriculum Framework. International Bureau of Education, Training Tools for Curriculum Development. UNESCO. Available at: <http://disde.minedu.gob.pe/bitstream/handle/MINEDU/5642/Prototype%20of%20a%20National%20Curriculum%20Framework.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

39 Yambi, T. (2018). Assessment and evaluation in education. Available at: https://www.academia.edu/35685843/ASSESSMENT_AND_EVALUATION_IN_EDUCATION

Google Scholar

40 Hyslop, A. (2014). The Case Against Exit Exams. New American Education, Policy Brief. Available at: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED579082.pdf>

41 Clarke, M., And Greaney, V. (2020). Public Examination Examined. International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, Washington, DC. Available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/32352/9781464814181.pdf>

42 Ibid.

43 Shohamy, E. (1993). The Power of Tests. The Impact of Language Tests on Teaching.

Like the rest of the curriculum components, effective and centralised assessment and evaluation units are almost non-existent in the Somali system. This can primarily be attributed to the lack of unified syllabi in the country. As previously noted, the government only managed to produce unified curriculum content in 2020 but this was not implemented in all regions of the country.



The 2020 secondary school results exposed the weaknesses in the public examination effort. As in 2019, the 2020 exam results had a 74% pass rate. Thus, in two successive years, 25% of the students that sat for the final exams did not pass

Somalia had a centralized examination system led by the Ministry of Education until the collapse of the central government in 1991. Though the discussion around a unified public exams system took place for years among stakeholders, it was President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud's administration that began the revival of centralized exit exams in the Banadir region in the 2015/16 academic year.⁴⁴ At the time, education stakeholders resisted because it was a clear example of a government that wanted to take control of examinations where it did not run schools. However, the resistance from stakeholders has gradually softened and public exams or exit exams, particularly secondary school exit exams, have become a feature in the education calendar. Even so, public examinations are being conducted without implementing an effective assessment and evaluation system. The 2020 secondary school results exposed the weaknesses in the public examination effort. As in 2019, the 2020 exam results had a 74% pass rate. Thus, in two successive years, 25% of the students that sat for the final exams did not pass.



It is unclear what standard was used to create the league table for different regions in the country knowing that the syllabi were not unified. The league table and exam results raised more questions about the validity and reliability of the exam

However, unlike 2019, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education's secondary school exam results for 2020 showed a league table for pass and fail rates for different regions in the country.⁴⁵ The league table put Jubaland, where less than 1,000 students sit for the exam, at the top of the league table and Banadir, where close to 34,000 students participated in the exam, at the bottom. Jubaland and Banadir had pass rates of 77% and 64%, respectively.⁴⁶ It is unclear what standard was used to create the league table for different regions in the country knowing that the syllabi were not unified. The league table and exam results raised more questions about the validity and reliability of the exam.

The announcement of the secondary school results created a political storm and generated anger and resentment, particularly from parents whose children failed. Putting aside the argument on the reliability and validity of the secondary school exams, and whether it was the right time to have national exit exams in the absence of unified curriculum contents, labelling students as failures is unnecessary and could be counterproductive.

44 Adan, C. S (2020). Imtixaanka dalka: Tabashada jirta iyo tubta toosinta. BBC Somali. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/somali/war-54089615>

45 Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education (2020). War-saxaafadeed/press-release. Available at: <https://moe.gov.so/wasaaradda-waxbarashada-hiddaha-iyo-tacliinta-sare-ee-xfs-oo-maanta-soo-bandhigtay-natiijada-imtixaanka-shahaadiga-ah-ee-fasalka-12aad-ee-dugsiga-sare/>

46 Ibid.



It is highly questionable to label the 25% of students who did not succeed at their exams but who had completed 12 years of schooling as having failed. If anything, this indicates the failure of the entire educational system—not just the students themselves

It is highly questionable to label the 25% of students who did not succeed at their exams but who had completed 12 years of schooling as having failed. If anything, this indicates the failure of the entire educational system—not just the students themselves. As previously noted, assessment and evaluation do not only reflect on the students' achievements, they also pass judgement on the soundness of the pedagogical practices and curriculum content.

The educational system should move away from giving a fail grade on national certificates. Educationalists around the world continue to raise this point. For instance, Clarke and Greaney pointed out that “while recognizing that many examination boards and systems have long-established traditions of reporting failure rates, consideration might be given to using carefully designed examinations and scoring systems to describe low achievement levels without attaching a failing label to a student’s record.”⁴⁷ In the Somali context, this could mean changing the entire result into grades rather than scores. This is very common in many countries where students are given grades such as A, B and so on. It also means abolishing the practice of repeating an entire school year. Students who scored low grades in certain subjects would be allowed to retake that a particular subject but not forced to repeat the whole year.

6. Administration of Education

Somalia officially adopted a federal system for its government in 2004. Under the new system, the conditions for building the FMSs were laid out in the provisional constitution. Excluding Somaliland which aims to secede from the rest, there are five member states: Puntland, Galmudug, South-West, Jubaland and Hirshabelle.⁴⁸ With the exception of Puntland which was established in 1998, the remaining four members states are relatively new. For example, Hirshabelle was only founded in 2016. In Somalia, federalism is a work in progress as agreement on key components such as power/resource sharing has not yet been achieved with the federal government.⁴⁹

Education is one of the contentious and unresolved issues. Neither the provisional constitution nor legislation clearly defines the powers and responsibilities between the FGS and FMSs on education.⁵⁰ Moreover, the parliament has not yet passed the education act. The provisional constitution, instead of offering clarity and the demarcation of powers and responsibilities, sows confusion and contradiction. For instance, one article gives the central government full control over the education curriculum while another calls for a negotiation between the federal government and member states.⁵¹ To further complicate this situation, Somalia does not have a constitutional court.

47 Cohen, J. (2004). Linking Decentralization and School Quality Improvement. Washington, DC: USAID, Educational Quality Improvement Project 2.

48 HIPS (2007). Somali's Parliament should produce a constitution by and for the people. Heritage Institute for Policy Studies, Mogadishu, Somalia. Available at: <http://www.heritageinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Somalias-parliament-should-produce-a-constitution-by-and-for-the-people.pdf>

49 Muhumed, A. A. (2020). Dysfunctional federalism: How political division, constitutional ambiguity and a unitary mindset thwart power sharing in Somalia. The Heritage Institute for Policy Studies. Available at: <http://www.heritageinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/federalism.pdf>

50 Ibid.

51 Article 30(6) of the provisional constitution gives the FGS full control of the education curriculum of the country. Article 52 and Article 54 call for negotiation between the two levels of government. Aside the few exclusive functions given to the Federal Government, Article 54 clearly calls for the levels of the government to negotiate on competencies.

Although federalism is a new phenomenon in Somalia, it is a system of government for about 25 countries across the globe, representing about 40% of the world's population.⁵² The essence of federalism is to bring power and decision making closer to the people. Education is one of the areas that the advocates of decentralization believe would assign control of public education to local and regional entities.⁵³

“
Furthermore, decentralization in education has been viewed as the “locus” of decision making that will result in improvement in the quality of education

Decentralization has been defined as a “shift in the location of those who govern, about the transfer of authority from those in one location or level vis-à-vis education organization to those on another level.”⁵⁴ Furthermore, decentralization in education has been viewed as the “locus” of decision making that will result in improvement in the quality of education.⁵⁵

Over the last three decades, the decentralization movement in education has grown around the world based on the belief that it “will improve the quality of education service by locating decisions closer to the point at which they must be carried out and by energizing teachers and administrators to do a better job.”⁵⁶ Decentralization is a broad theme that even unitary states employ when it comes to bringing the decision making closer to the people. In other words, a country does not need to have a federal government to decentralize its education. Under decentralization, the transfer of power can be divided into four models: deconcentration, delegation, devolution and privatisation.⁵⁷ Many people are familiar with the last model, privatisation, and some scholars consider that model to be a form of devolution.⁵⁸ Thus, we focus on providing a brief description of the remaining three models that were addressed by scholars in the field.⁵⁹

“
Thus, we focus on providing a brief description of the remaining three models that were addressed by scholars in the field

1. **De-concentration** is the reorganisation of decision making within the Ministry of Education and the bureaucracy. In a de-concentrated system, the central government retains full responsibility, but administration is handled by regional or district offices. De-concentration of the educational system may be the first step taken by governments in their efforts to decentralize. Educational systems in Armenia, Chile and Tanzania have elements of de-concentration⁶⁰

2. **Devolution** is the permanent transfer of decision-making responsibilities in education from the central government to lower levels of government such as provinces, municipalities and districts. One example is Chile where the central government provides 90% of the education funds on a per capita basis but has transferred responsibility for providing education to the municipal governments.⁶¹

52 Wong, K.K., Knupling, F., & Kolling, M. (2018). *Federalism and Education: Ongoing Challenges and Policy Strategies in Ten Countries*. Information Age Publishing.

53 Tucker, M. (2011). *Surpassing Shanghai: An Agenda for American Education Built on the World's Leading Systems*. Cambridge: Harvard Education Press.

54 McGinn, N., and Welsh, T. (1999). *Decentralisation of Education: why, when, what and how?* International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO. Available at: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/44824547_Decentralization_of_education_why_when_what_and_how

55 Bjork, C. (2006). *Educational Decentralization: Asian Experiences and Conceptual Contributions*. Netherlands: Springer.

56 Fiske, E. B. (1996). *Decentralization of Education: Politics and Consensus*. World Bank, Washington, D.C., p.24.

57 Rondinelli, D. A. (1999). What is Decentralization? In Litvack, J. & J. Seddon (Eds.), *Decentralization Briefing Notes*. World Bank Institute Working Papers. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.

58 Suzuki, 2002; UNESCO (2004). *Formula funding of schools, decentralization and corruption: a comparative analysis*. Paris: IIEP.

59 McGinn & Welsh, 1999; Weidman & DePietro-Jurand, 2011; Winkler & Gershburg, 2003).

60 Winkler, D. R. and A.I. Gershberg. (2003). *Education Decentralization in Africa: A review of recent policy and practice*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank.

61 Ibid

3. **Delegation**, or school autonomy, is the administrative or legal transfer of responsibilities to elected or appointed school governing bodies such as school councils, school management committees and school governing boards. El Salvador is an example of an educational system with school autonomy. Communities manage schools, hire and fire teachers, maintain infrastructure and raise additional funds.

Having established the modality of the decentralisation of education, we now turn our attention to what type of education services can be decentralized. For this, we present an old, but relevant, typology that was proposed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). This can be used to guide Somalia in its effort to decentralize some of the country’s educational services to the FMSs.

Table 1 shows Education decisions that can be decentralized

Organisation of instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selecting the school attended by student Set the instruction time Choosing the textbooks Defining the curriculum content Determine the teaching methods
Personnel management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hiring and firing the school director Recruiting and hiring teachers Setting or augmenting teacher’s pay scales Assigning teaching responsibilities Determining the provision of in-service training
Planning and structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creating or closing a school Selecting the programs offered in a school Defining the course content Setting examinations to monitor school performance
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing a school improvement plan Allocating funding for a personnel budget Allocating funding for a non-personnel budget Allocating resources for in-service teacher training

Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) .(1998). Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators 1998. Paris and Washington D.C.: OECD.

Improving access and the quality of education are key drivers for the decentralization arguments. There are advocates for and against decentralization.⁶² According to Heredia-Ortiz, “education has not been the only public service to undergo decentralisation reforms.” Countries have implemented decentralization in “health service delivery, transportation and road services” among others⁶³ On balance, and if implemented correctly, decentralization is likely to improve education. However, it is important to note that “there is no simple rule to follow when it comes to decentralizing education. The issue becomes one of finding a balance between degrees of centralized and decentralized decision-making of functions in education across different levels of government, given the education system objectives.”⁶⁴

“
Taking power
from Mogadishu
so it can then be
kept in the capital
cities of the FMSs
should not be
the motivation
because, in
essence, it
would contradict
the purpose
and spirit of the
decentralization of
education

As previously noted, Somalia does not have an agreed upon model for decentralizing its education services to the FMSs or districts, thus making the provision of education service a hotly contested issue. To our knowledge, no serious discussions have occurred on the extent to which the country’s educational system can tolerate decentralization and what can or cannot be decentralized. This discussion is crucial, and it should be guided by the need to allocate some power and responsibilities to the districts to improve access to education while safeguarding the quality and integrity of education and the education system. However, it should be noted that the decentralization of education would be pointless if any of the power and responsibility gained from the federal government is not shared with lower levels of administration in the member states. Taking power from Mogadishu so it can then be kept in the capital cities of the FMSs should not be the motivation because, in essence, it would contradict the purpose and spirit of the decentralization of education.

Although this study presents best practices around the world, it does not recommend a specific model of decentralization for Somalia. Knowledge about the different decentralization modalities, and what can be decentralized, is available. The policymakers at the federal and state levels must agree on the most suitable model for the country. This decision should be based on research evidence and after consulting with all relevant stakeholders.

62 Gaynor, C. (1998). Education Decentralization: Teacher Management. Washington D.C.: The World Bank.
Heredia-Ortiz, E. (2017). The Impact of Education Decentralization on Education Output: A Cross-Country Study.
63 Dissertation for the degree of PhD, Georgia State University, US. Available at: https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/econ_diss/21 p.18). p.22).
64 Ibid, p.18.

7. Conclusion



The report presented how the challenges in the areas of curriculum content and educational philosophy, teacher development, assessment and evaluation, and administration of education can be addressed

Debates on education have always taken the center stage in Somali society. Even during the civil war and in the absence of an effective central government, the questions on how best to educate the Somali children and the modality of the curriculum were discussed by education providers and parents alike. The most intense education debate in recent history took place in the summer of 2020. The discussion was triggered by the launch of a new national curriculum and controversy over the national exam results. But the dialogue also focused on broader educational challenges the country is facing and led to an agreement between the FGS and the FMSs in August 2021. In the light of this agreement, this report provided an overview of major educational challenges with the aim of facilitating the implementation of the agreement between the FGS and FMSs. The report presented how the challenges in the areas of curriculum content and educational philosophy, teacher development, assessment and evaluation, and administration of education can be addressed. The research concludes with policy recommendations.

8. Policy considerations

We put forward the following policy recommendations in the areas of curriculum, teacher development, assessment and evaluation as well as relating to education and federalism:

- Professionals should run the recently established Curriculum and Teaching Qualifications Council. The council should oversee developing, reviewing and reforming the curriculum. The mandate of the council should be laid out in a law in order to avoid its politicization.

- The mission and vision of basic education in Somalia should be clearly articulated in consultation with all stakeholders. Using traditional and social media outlets, the public should be educated about the new education objectives of the country.



Minimum training requirements should be established for new teachers at both private and public schools

- Minimum training requirements should be established for new teachers at both private and public schools. All existing teachers with no teaching qualifications should complete their training within a clear timeline that does not exceed two academic years.

- The Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education must maintain a database of all teachers in the country with in-service and pre-service training plans. No teacher should be allowed in the classroom without first registering with the proper authority.

- Private universities and research centers should be allowed to provide accredited pre- and in-service teaching qualification training programs.



The minimum pay for teachers should be set and teachers should be paid a living wage

- The Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education should regulate teachers' pay and compensation at both private and public schools. The minimum pay for teachers should be set and teachers should be paid a living wage.

- The Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education should collaborate with other government entities to launch a Teacher's Week awareness campaign to positively change the public's perception of teachers and the teaching profession. The current practice of dedicating one day in November as Teacher's Day is insufficient.

- An examination board should be established and run by professionally qualified individuals. The mandate for the exam board should be clearly laid out in legislation.



Labelling students who did not pass the national certificate exam as failures should be stopped

- Labelling students who did not pass the national certificate exam as failures should be stopped. Students should be given final grades instead of scores and be allowed to decide for themselves which subjects they resit rather than being forced to do so by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education.

- The Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education should commission a research study into the most suitable decentralization model for Somalia. Until this is done, the ministry should be flexible when dealing with the member states on education matters.

HERITAGE

I N S T I T U T E