



UNISO Spectrum

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Praise be to Allah, who taught by the pen, taught man what he did not know. And prayers and peace be upon the Messenger of Allah, the best of creation, the harbinger of the eternal message.

Thanks to Allah, the University of Somalia has decided to launch a bi-annual opinion magazine called UNISO Spectrum to present a diversity of perspectives and opinions about important issues in Somali society.

This is the first issue of UNISO Spectrum which includes thirteen short articles on education, business and economics, politics and social sciences, and health and environment.



UNISO Spectrum aims to convey accurate and relevant information on a variety of topics that can be understood by a wide range of interested readers from different backgrounds and levels of education. The content is free of professional jargon so that all its readers have an equal opportunity to access the material and benefit from it. UNISO Spectrum serves as a platform shared by junior and senior writers and researchers to draw attention to the current issues and challenges facing our country and offer some solutions.

The University of Somalia is a newly-formed institution compared to other universities and institutions of research and learning. It is only eighteen years old, but it has come a long way since its inception in 2005, and thousands of male and female students have successfully completed their programs and graduated from UNISO. These graduates are now occupying prominent positions in society and are being employed in government departments.

We hope that UNISO Spectrum will become another milestone in the University's accomplishments and be of great benefit to all its readers.

Dr. Mohamed Sh. Issak Hassan

An Editor-in-Chief and A Senior Adviser to the Vice Chancellor
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Will Foreign Licensed Banks Change Somalia's Banking Sector?

Dr. Ahmed khadar Abdi Jama



Dr. Ahmed khadar Abdi Jama
VICE CHANCELLOR
UNIVERSITY OF SOMALIA (UNISO)

In the last decade, Somalia has witnessed unprecedented expansion in the banking sector, leading to the opening of numerous commercial banks. According to the 2021 report of the Central Bank of Somalia, 13 new commercial banks have been licensed, most with close ties to international banks as a gateway into the international financial market. There are also cases where money transfer operators have successfully upgraded their status into financial institutions in their own right. These banks, which claim that they adhere to Shariah principles, provide a number of services ranging from retail banking to project investment and startup business.

In July 2022, the Central Bank of Somalia issued a statement that two foreign commercial banks, the Egyptian Banque Misr and the Turkish Ziraat Katli Bank have been licensed to operate in Somalia. These two banks will be the first foreign banks permitted to operate in the country since the nationalization of the foreign commercial banks under Barre's regime in 1972. This news has caused mixed reactions from the public. Local finance experts had not foreseen the imminent entry of international banks into the Somali banking sector. Most local banks are not prepared for competition with foreign banks which have international presence and operate in stronger economies. On the other hand, others see this move as an opportunity to improve Somalia's international reputation as a destination for foreign direct investment.

The question is whether the newly licensed foreign commercial banks will indeed improve the landscape of Somalia's banking sector. Prior to the licensing of these two foreign banks, the competition was limited to the local banks which were offering basic retail and investment services to the Somali public. Given that Banque Misr and Ziraat Katli Bank have more experience and resources than the local banks, the bar has certainly been moved up and takes the competition to an international level, bringing new services

and new types of banking operations to Somalia. This in turn might force the local banks to make structural changes in their banking operations, either by merging with one another or increasing their own international presence.

There are three likely focus areas in this new competition between the foreign banks and the national banks in Somalia. The first expected change is the shift in investment services provided by the banks in Somalia. As mentioned earlier, the investment or the financing opportunities provided by the local banks to the public are basic financial services. However, the foreign banks might offer a wider and more sophisticated level of services, for example, providing mutual fund and tailoring their investment funds to specific sectors such as agriculture. The latter investment category is certainly needed in Somalia.

The second expected change is the scope of money transfer activities. Somalis have difficulty in sending and receiving money internationally due to security issues and the close monitoring of its financial sector. When there were no international banking services available, the local banks devised a variety of methods to perform international money transfers through correspondence banks and unregulated money transfer agencies. This means that the newly licensed foreign banks will offer a viable alternative through their operating networks in their home countries and international subsidiaries. However, this also gives them the competitive advantage over the local banks.

The third and most important change is the shift of UN, NGOs, and other international agencies to the new foreign banks to conduct their retail banking services and project financing. This means that their substantial deposits will be made to either Banque Misr or Ziraat Katli Bank and no longer to the local banks. The same will be the case of Somali expatriates who will use their services to transfer private and business funds. More importantly, Turkish companies like Albarak which manages the Mogadishu seaport and Favori which operates the Aden Adde International Airport are expected to rely heavily on Ziraat Katli Bank. In this case, the local banks will be hard-pressed to make sufficient deposits and might even be forced out of the market.

In summary, the changes to Somalia's banking sector are inevitable and are the direct result of permitting foreign banks to operate in the country. Therefore, I recommend that these local banks undertake structural reforms, especially in the type and quality of their banking services, to improve their service delivery and maintain a good market share in the sector. Finally, the local banks have to advocate for new regulations that can protect them against the heavyweight competition from international banks.

Reflection on Hospitality Industry in Mogadishu, Somalia

Dr. Hassan Mohamed Sayid

Have you ever wandered through the streets of Mogadishu in recent years? I mean the main road that meanders through the spine of the Somali community's economic enterprise, all the way to downtown market, including Bakara?

Perhaps you may have observed too many hotels and restaurants in Mogadishu's New Centre of Business (NCB) including the area that extends between KM4 and Zope Area. Or you may have noticed so many red colored motorcycles (Bajaj) in Mogadishu's busiest streets or so many coffee shops springing up all over the area.

One question, or rather concern, that comes to your mind is: Why do investors put their money in such a saturated business with diminishing customer footfalls and depreciating revenue? For business people and entrepreneurs, one issue that occupies the mind of any investor is: the element of sustained cash flow, and frugal liquidity for operational and profitable sustainability.

One of the characteristics of human nature is to imitate. Imitation normally happens when an individual observes and replicates another's behavior, particularly when the person imitated has a success story. Such imitation has become part of the evolutionary process. In fact, most of the products in the world today, cars, watches, mobile phones, computers, planes etcetera are drawn out of a sophisticated form of herd behavior. We learn from the actions of the people around us; we tend to follow the actions that proved to be successful and we avoid the mistakes that characterized poor performance. In several occasions, we are influenced in our decision-making by what others around us are doing or have done.

This phenomenon is referred to as herding. Herding often occurs when many people take the same action, perhaps because some mimic the actions of others. It means everyone is doing what everyone else is doing, even when their private information suggests doing something quite different. Or rather individual's behaviors imitate others rather than making



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individual decision on the basis of self-approved private information.

Anyway, who doesn't want to be a part of a proven success story? Imitation, or learning from a new business concept, paradigm or innovation is not largely frowned upon. However, imitation must be done within the confines of market determinants, creativity, innovation, and customer experience and demand characteristics.

Now you have seen more than 20 hotels and restaurants operating in a radius of 100m in Zope Area. You realize that this is a reflection of herding mentality which is a perfect copying and pasting other people's investment strategies without proper investment analysis. Such actions of joining the crowd blindly are attributed to psychological and emotional biases that bound the rationality of the investors in most cases. This eventually leads to an adverse selection and moral hazard in investment decisions.

Failure to control one's emotions and biases in investment decisions will not only cost an investor a fortune but also affect the sustainability of the whole industry. For example, the same customers of enterprise A will be moving between enterprises A, B, C leading to decrease of sales of A; a simple equation of demand and supply market mechanisms. To make it worse, Somali people love testing recipes of new places. Therefore, every new hotel will attract the sizeable customers from the neighboring hotels largely affecting the liquidity of these hotels. This continuous migration from one hotel to another will finally push majority of hotels out of business. This is the rationale of the negative effects of the herding mentality.

Herding may be instinctual but there are ways for one to avoid following the crowd blindly, especially if one thinks s/he will be making a mistake by doing so. It requires some discipline and a few considerations. The following are some suggestions:

- Stop looking at what others do.
- Ask questions about how and why people are taking certain actions.
- Make efforts and do your own research and feasibility study.
- Delay making your final decision if you are distracted, whether that's because of stress or any other external factor.
- Take the initiative, be daring, and don't be afraid to stand out from the crowd.

In my opinion, the Mogadishu restaurants case can be done differently. I am not arguing that there is nothing which can renovate or resuscitate restaurant businesses that have experienced diminishing returns in Zope area, Mogadishu, as a result of low customer footfall. A lot can be done but must be done within the precincts of innovations and good business practices. This requires doing further research on customer needs, developing end-to-end concept of

creativity to sustain the business and offering extremely unique customer experience. What should never be static is the adaptability of the investment modalities.

Conclusion

The herd behavior can be argued to contain in itself good and bad attributes. In most cases, it is averred that a good investor can borrow an idea and see an opportunity which is far much greater than the limits presented by a different investor from whom the idea was borrowed. Such intuition should run on the basis of innovation and creativity. If one must borrow or copy any idea such must be done deterministically and with care and wisdom on all fronts. Such care should be on borrowing framework of concept but tailor-making the concept to improve customer experience and innovations. We consistently need to innovate to remain relevant, build loyal customer base and maintain its foothold or dominance in certain segment of the economy.



Benefits and Drawbacks of the Unofficial ‘Dollarization’ of the Somali Economy

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Over the past three decades, Somalia has endured severe economic hardships and political instability due to the collapse of the central authority. Every part of the country has experienced some sort of crisis, while the means of livelihood have been badly diminished. The financial sector was among the most affected sectors after the collapse of central authority in 1991, and the public financial sector completely disappeared. Consequently, the monetary policy of the Somali Central Bank and financial regulations were no longer effective in Somalia today.

Since the collapse of the military regime in 1991, the financial system became an orphan in the land of lawlessness; there was no ministry of finance to set fiscal policies and monetary targets and no central bank to set financial instruments and regulate markets by putting in place financial tactics to prevent and mitigate the financial crisis. The fifty-shilling, one-hundred, and five-hundred-shilling banknotes were discarded and became useless after the money was devaluated. The only remaining banknote in circulation was the one-thousand-shilling banknote.

The northern regions broke away from other parts of the Somali Republic and started printing their own money, while the southern regions started circulating false banknotes issued by businessmen collaborating with the warlords and clan leaders. This development led to soaring inflation and ever-rising prices, and the local businesses soon grew frustrated and tired with the prolonged illegal market intervention. This situation contributed, at least partially, to the adoption of the US dollar as unofficial currency in Somalia. Many communities were used to receive money transfers from their relatives living in Western countries, mostly in US dollars. International forces led by the USA arrived in Somalia in 1992 and brought with them a lot of hard currency in US dollar notes to facilitate what was known as Operation Restore Hope.

The combination of the above factors (inflation, devaluation, and US dollar

transfers) had the effect that the Somali people quickly lost faith in the Somali currency. In the last two decades, successive governments have failed to replace counterfeit and unofficial banknotes still in circulation in parts of the Federal Republic of Somalia.

Some scholars have deliberated whether the adoption of the US dollar as unofficial currency is beneficial or detrimental to the local economy. To answer this question, we need to look at the pros and cons of the 'dollarization' of the Somali economy. When the Somali public started using the US dollar for their transactions, they wanted to ease inflation, curb skyrocketing prices and avoid false money. The outcome of preferring the US dollar over the local currency had three main effects which are as follows:

First, when the public switched to using the US dollar, printing counterfeit money stopped because businesses refused to accept the newly printed banknotes.

Second, the Somali businesses depended heavily on imports; the traders could finally relax because they found a way to avoid exchange volatility risks. Soon, most price tags simply showed US dollars, and the local commercial banks accepted local deposits in US dollars because they were already handling foreign transfers in the same currency.

Third, the US dollar was easy to carry and store, which meant greasing the circulation wheel by injecting a highly reputable and strong medium of exchange.

However, this unofficial dollarization of the economy was not free from negative side effects, which are highlighted below.

First, for the rural communities in the villages, the US dollar notes were not readily and easily available because they were circulating in the commercial centers and big cities. The local farmers used to sell their livestock and produce in Somali shillings. When they wanted to buy imported foodstuff such as sugar, rice, and flour, the farmers needed US dollars which they simply did not have.

Second, small businesses such as teashop owners, hawkers and costermongers struggled for survival because their customers did not have ready access to US dollars.

Third, the majority of laborers who depended on their daily wage were also in dire straits after the dollarization because they used to be paid in Somali shilling. They found themselves at a loss to buy scratch cards, paying their children's school fees, and their rent.

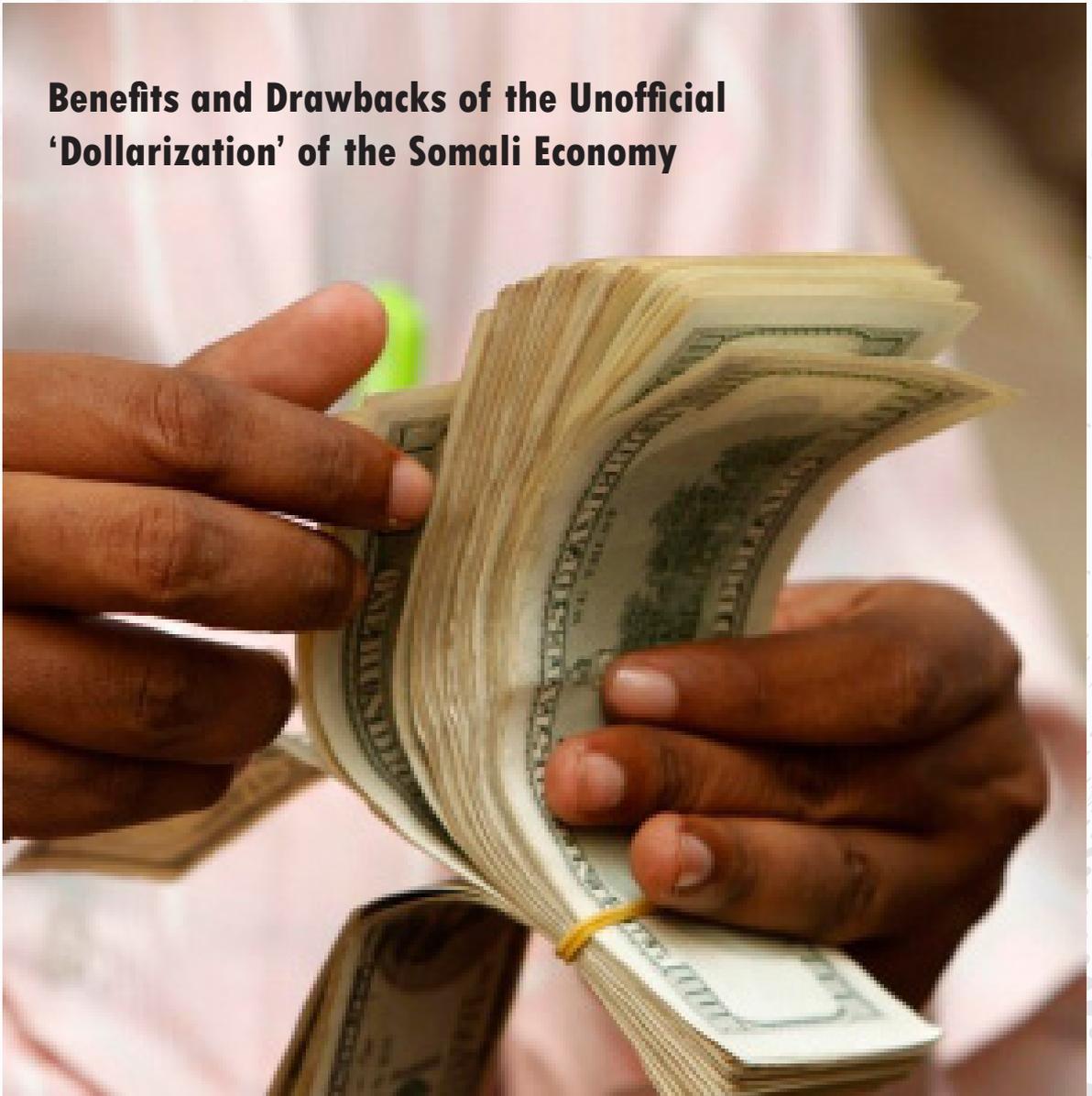
Fourth, the Somali economy was prevented from recovering and becoming more resilient. Low income coupled with high prices meant that imported goods were costly and financial transactions depended on an unofficial and therefore unregulated hard currency.

Finally, the example of Somalia has shown that a country loses its financial independence when it uses a foreign currency instead of its local currency. Each country should have its own local currency because without a local currency it cannot act independently and set its own financial policies and unit of account. Currency dependence poses a threat to the

country's economic wellbeing in the long run, although there are certain undeniable benefits in the short run.

Adopting a foreign currency means that the country which owns the adopted currency, in this case the USA, can interrupt and manipulate the local economy. As a result, the entire financial sector becomes paralyzed because currency is a major instrument for implementing fiscal and financial policies. Therefore, the Somali Central Bank is unable to regulate and control the market, because it is hard to regulate one's market when one has no control over the currency in circulation. Every country's central bank controls inflation by regulating the money supply, which is impossible in this situation. If Somalia continues to rely on the US dollar, the Somali Central Bank can only play a ceremonial role in the country's finance.

Benefits and Drawbacks of the Unofficial 'Dollarization' of the Somali Economy



Effects of Underutilization of Natural Resources on Employment in Somalia

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Since 1960, employment in Somalia has faced a lot of challenges, one of them being limited employment opportunities. Although, the International Labor Organization (ILO) highlighted that Somalia has one of the highest rates of youth unemployment in the world, estimated at 19.9 per cent, Somalia has an abundance in employment opportunities in agriculture, fishing, livestock, service industry, and manufacturing.

The agriculture sector offers many employment opportunities because Somalia has vast areas of arable land suitable for agro-businesses. Before the collapse of the central government in 1991, it was estimated that 45.9 per cent of the Somali workforce was employed in agriculture, 25.2 per cent in crop cultivation, and 9.4 per cent in herding. The agricultural sector contributed to 60 per cent of the economic activity in the country, foremost in banana cultivation and export.

Today, however, Somalia imports almost all of its essential food supplies. Opportunities can be found here as so far there has been no significant investment in this field due to security issues, droughts, floods, and effects of climate change. With investments in agriculture, Somalia can produce the foodstuff that is currently imported. This has the added benefit of circulating more money within the country and in turn creating more job opportunities.

The second area of employment opportunities is in the fishing sector. Somalia has the second largest coastline in Africa, but only 4.0 per cent of the population work in the fishing industry. The local culture is over-reliant on agriculture and livestock keeping. According to the data from the Food and Agricultural Organization, the only under-fished fish stocks anywhere in the world are off the Somalian coast. One can only imagine the income and employment this sector can contribute to the economy of Somalia. It is estimated by the fisheries experts that this industry can employ 20 people on land for every five jobs created at sea. Regrettably, there is no efficient and well-organized activity in fishing, and many opportunities are

wasted as a result. By creating interest in fishing and investing in the fishing industry, for example, by creating cold storage facilities, more people will learn to see the fishing industry as a viable source of employment.

The third sector where there are job opportunities is in livestock. Livestock such as goats, sheep, cattle, and camels have been part of our rural life since time immemorial. The Somali people kept these animals for food, milk, trade, transport, hides and skin for garments and bedding and as status symbols. The more animals a Somali owned, the more powerful this person was considered in society. This industry contributed a lot to Somalia's GDP before the violence and collapse of the central government in 1991. Since then, the country's agricultural exports have drastically declined.

Today, the service industry seems to be the fastest growing sector in Somalia. This sector has contributed significantly to the job sector and has increased the GDP. The most significant industries include telecommunications, financial services, education, construction, electricity and water supply, retail trade, car hire, hotels, television and radio broadcasting, vehicle repair, and waste disposal management. However, there is still room for growth in the service sector and should not be overlooked. India, for example, has become one of the fastest growing economies through building a strong service industry.

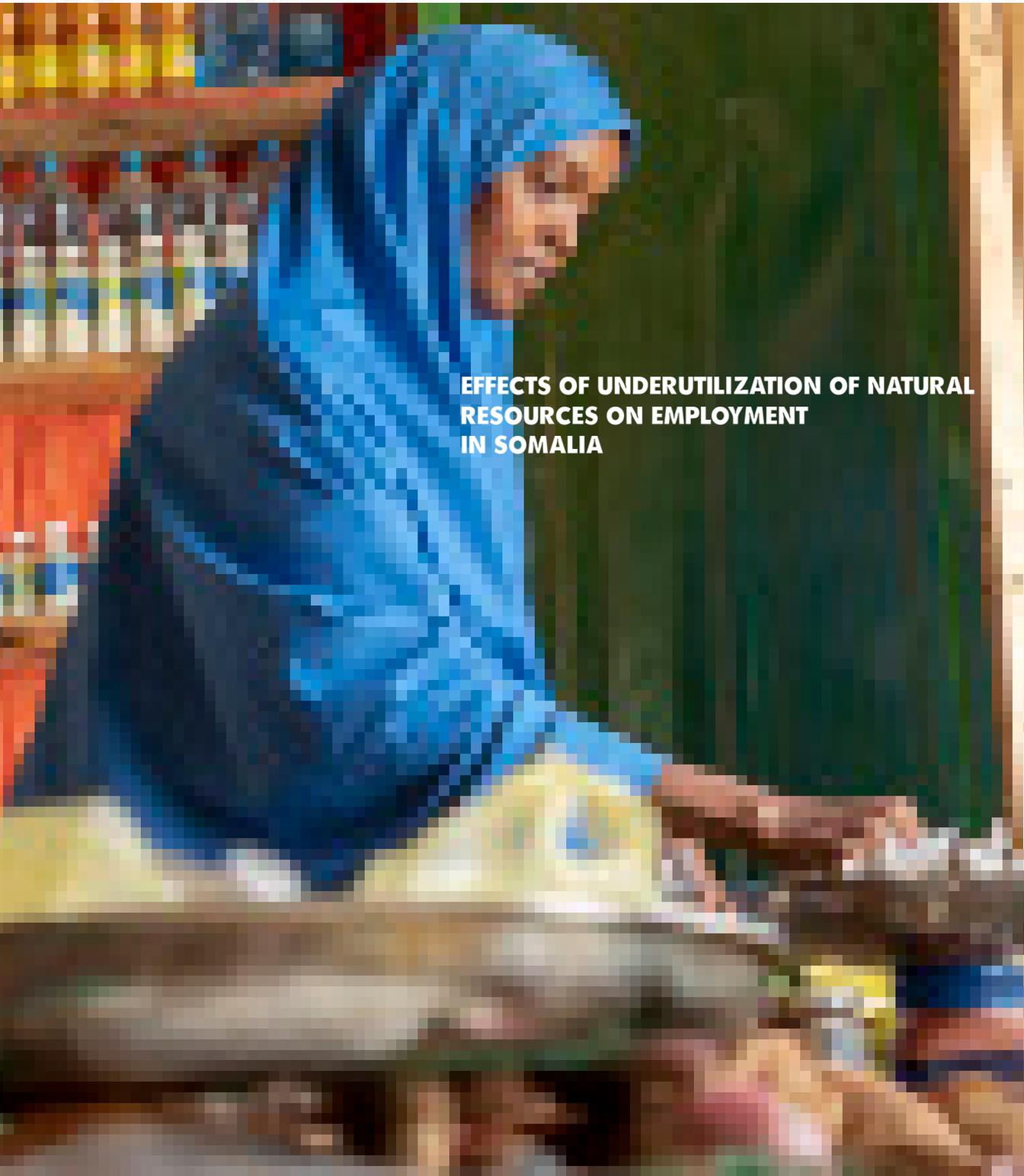
Similarly, there are plenty of employment opportunities in the manufacturing sector. However, this is the weakest sector in Somalia's economy because of a lack of capital investment due to political instability. Somalia can overcome this obstacle by stabilizing its politics and by taking full advantage of its strategic location and natural resources, which would consequently attract more foreign investments. However, until this problem is resolved, the sector faces the following major challenges:

- Inefficient ports, mediocre quality roads, and shortage of energy needed in manufacturing (Somalia produces the most cost-intensive electrical energy).
- Unskilled labor: Somalia does not have sufficient skilled and professional labor. This has forced many sectors to import skilled labor, which has contributed to the high cost of production.
- Import of cheap products: Many local manufacturing industries have collapsed due to the importation of cheap industrial products from outside the country, which has created unnecessary competition in the market.
- Predatory pricing: Some import companies sell goods below the required cost with the purpose of punishing a competitor or local manufacturer and or other companies to push the competitors out of business.
- Lack of legislation: The absence of a strong government and proper legislation to protect companies and consumers from unfair business practices demotivates the local manufacturers who need trade protection to thrive.

Attempts to find solutions to the aforesaid challenges rely heavily on government assistance. Manufacturing is one of those industries that are expensive to set up, but once

they are up and running, they are of immense benefit to the economy because they solve the export-import deficit.

In conclusion, the lack of employment opportunities in Somalia has generally been blamed on the political strife that has bedeviled the country for the last 30 years. However, for positive changes in the sector to be realized, economic experts have to offer practical solutions to diversify Somalia's economy.

A woman wearing a blue hijab is seated at a desk in what appears to be a classroom or library. She is looking down at a book or document on the desk, with her right hand pointing to a specific section. The background shows a bookshelf filled with books and a green chalkboard.

**EFFECTS OF UNDERUTILIZATION OF NATURAL
RESOURCES ON EMPLOYMENT
IN SOMALIA**

Inflation in Somalia in 2022: Causes and Consequences

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Inflation is one of the most important macroeconomic variables and also the variable which is the most feared by the economic actors, including the government. This is because inflation can negatively affect the structure of production costs and the level of state welfare. Inflation also has wider effects such as instability, diminished economic growth and competitiveness, increased interest rate, uneven income distribution, and rising unemployment. Some countries that have experienced hyperinflation show that poor inflation can lead to social and political instability and decline of economic growth.

Inflation can be defined as a rise in prices or the decline of purchasing power over time. In a market economy, prices for goods and services can always change. In a healthy economy, some prices rise, and some prices fall; however, inflation occurs when there is a general and undifferentiated increase in the prices of goods and services, not just of individual items.

Inflation is the rate of increase in prices over a given period of time. Inflation is typically a broad measure, such as the overall increase in prices or the increase in the cost of living in a country. The rise in prices, which is often expressed as a percentage, means that a unit of currency effectively buys less than it did before. Inflation can be contrasted with deflation which occurs when prices decline and purchasing power increases.

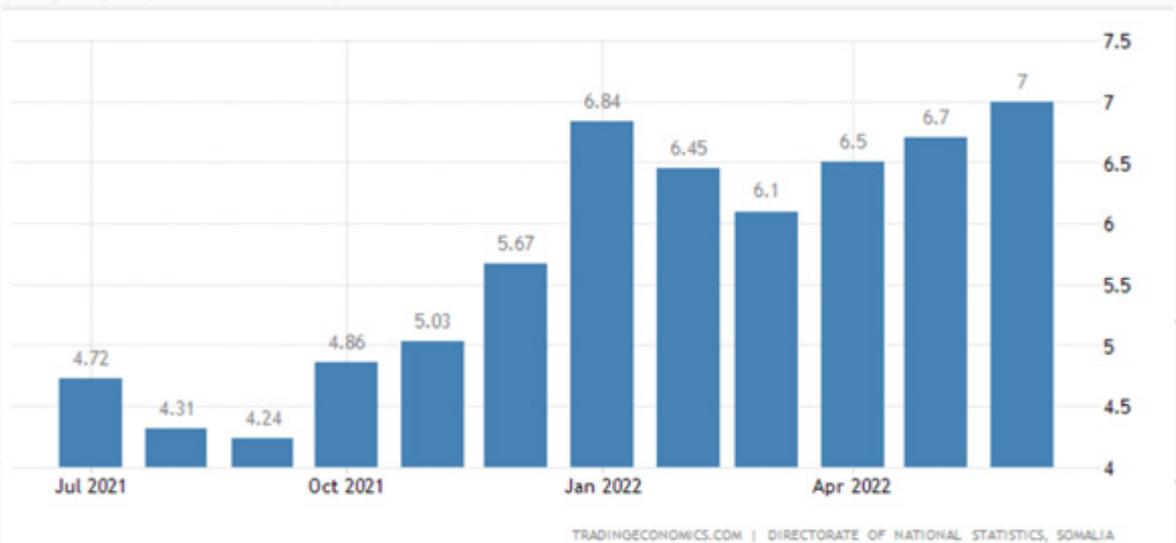
Somalia has been classified by the United Nations as a country with the majority of its population being dependent on agriculture and livestock for their livelihood. The economy of Somalia was USD49.918 billion by gross domestic product (GDP) as of 2020.

The Somali economy is in the process of recovering from the 2020 recession and has registered a GDP growth of 2.0 per cent in 2021, driven by private consumption and livestock exports. But in the first half of 2022, multiple shocks including

droughts, the Russia-Ukraine war and the aftershocks of COVID-19 have slowed the pace of recovery and increased poverty.

In Somalia, the inflation rate measures a broad rise or fall in prices that consumers pay for a standard basket of goods. The most important categories in the Somali consumer price index are food and non-alcoholic beverages (46%), housing, water, electricity, and gas (23%), followed by clothing and footwear (5%), health (5%), transport (4%), furnishing, household, and maintenance (3%), communications (3%), tobacco and narcotics (1%), and recreation and culture (1%).

The annual inflation rate in Somalia rose to 6.98 per cent in June of 2022, from 6.6 per cent in the previous month. It was the highest inflation rate since December 2005, amid acceleration in prices of food and non-alcoholic beverages (16.86% compared to 14.74% in May 2022). Meanwhile, inflation eased for transport (1.03% compared to 1.35%) and housing and utilities (1.34% vs 3.81%). On a monthly basis, consumer prices fell by 0.06 percent after having declined by 1.47 percent in the preceding month. (Source: Directorate of National Statistics, Somalia)



Droughts are not uncommon in Somalia, which is ranked the second most vulnerable country to climate change in the world. There have been recurring dry spells interspersed with flooding over the last decade, including a devastating famine in 2011 which killed over 250,000 people. Nomadic pastoralists and farming communities have little time to recover from one disaster strikes. The severe drought in Somalia has put 8.3 million people at risk of food insecurity, while around 1.8 million children are likely to be acutely wasted by July 2023.

Both major producers of staple food items, Russia and Ukraine provide 90 per cent of the wheat supply in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Eritrea, Georgia, Mongolia and Somalia. Ukraine is also a major source of wheat for the World Food Program which provides food assistance to 115.5 million people in more than 120 countries. Russia is one of the world's top three crude oil producers as well as the second largest producer—and largest exporter—of natural gas.

Soaring prices are contributing to a global cost-of-living crisis, the impact of which are falling disproportionately on the developing countries. Communities across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Middle East have been hit hard, with already vulnerable households paying the highest price.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the interrelationships between disease emergence and spread, different actors and segments of the agri-food system, and the multifaceted effects of the crisis. These complexities require policy responses grounded in solid evidence and supported by systemic research. Increased constraints on fiscal resources—in part a consequence of the continuing crisis—demand that such policies be informed, smart, and effective, contributing to agri-food system resilience and protecting the most vulnerable. Therefore, the necessary responses must be coordinated, linking health, environmental, social, and financial objectives, and their implementation should minimize unintended harms. In addition to emergency response measures such as income support programs, policies focused on the most vulnerable groups must target their basic needs, including sanitation and nutrition, to improve their ability to cope.

I believe that droughts in the country, COVID-19 and the Russia-Ukraine war have contributed to the increase of inflation in Somalia. In addition, the inflation has a negative impact on many aspects of Somali economy, the most important of which is its impact on purchasing power, commodity prices, and the economic condition of households which are hampering the business activities of the Somali people. This situation has created a state of uncertainty among savers and investors. My recommendation is that the government should work hard to prevent and stop the continuous rise of rates of inflation in Somalia by introducing economic policies that aim at increasing the productivity, inducing public saving, as well as providing the necessary basic needs to those affected by droughts.



UNIVERSITY OF SOMALIA (UNISO)

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Bachelor of Arts in Law

Bachelor of Arts in Political Science

Bachelor of Arts in social work

Without Writing Skills Forget Graduating

Dr. Mohamed Sh. Issak Hassan
Senior Adviser to the Vice Chancellor

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Poor writing skills among university students are a concern for both higher education institutions and employers in Somalia. As an educator who has been working in the higher education field in Somalia for the last seven years, I have noticed that university students are graduating and entering the workplace without being able to write in a clear and concise manner. Students' inability to write well may affect their chances to succeed in academics and secure employment. The following anecdote reinforces this phenomenon.

One of the local banks held a startup competition for students of the top 12 universities in Mogadishu, Somalia. The purpose of the competition was to give a financial reward to the top three students. An independent panel of experts was formed and entrusted with the task of determining the winners. The panel reported that the writing skills among the student competitors were very low, even to the extent that they could not write a short paragraph outlining the rationale for their proposed projects.

There are various factors behind students' poor writing skills. One of the major factors is lack of reading and encouragement to read. Students who are not in the habit of reading tend to lack ideas and do not have a wide range of vocabulary to express them. Most lecturers at university provide students with only the bare minimum of reading materials. Often, they feed their students with brief PowerPoint presentations with lots of bullet points and incomplete sentences which the students simply memorize. University lecturers also tend to spoon-feed their students to the point that the students do neither feel encouraged nor expected to read anything beyond their sparse course materials. Consequently, our teaching methods become strictly examination-based.

Lack of writing centers and projects offered in universities is another major factor for students' poor writing skills. Writing centers (WC) in well-established universities are located within academic libraries and serve as a means to provide students with research and writing services. These centers allow for the ease of referrals from a librarian to tutor and back. Collaborative efforts between librarians, tutors, and educators ensure the common goal of offering the students support in their writing projects.

A third major factor is the negative impact of the internet on students' writing

ability. Students have grown dependent on the chunks of information readily accessible on social networking sites and the web. This reduces their command over language use and creative writing skills. Students generally utilize slang words or abbreviated types of words through long-range interpersonal communications. They also rely heavily on spelling and grammar checking and translation apps. Recently, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has become so advanced that they are able to compose essays on demand. The accessibility of these easy shortcuts in writing decreases the students' motivation to develop their own writing skills. If a computer program does it better, then why even try?

These major factors are compounded with the students' weak foundation in writing when entering university, often coupled with their instructors' low competency in improving students' writing skills. Many of these instructors seem not to find the time to teach writing skills through revising and editing students' written assignments.

There are many strategies or approaches to improving students' writing skills. However, due to space constraints, I will confine myself to a few brief points that I consider relevant to students in Somali universities. First, since our students entering university have a weak foundation in writing, special English writing classes should be offered in the first semester, taught by senior lecturers who are competent in teaching those skills.

Second, students can be given brief writing exercises in class. To vary the pace of a lecture course, students can be asked to write a few minutes during class. Some mixture of in-class writing, outside writing assignments, and exams with open-ended questions will give students the challenge and practice they need to improve their writing skills. Students should also be allowed and encouraged to revise their submitted work.

Third, instructors should stress the importance of clear, thoughtful writing. Throughout the term students should be reminded that they must make their best effort in expressing themselves on paper. Instructors should offer detailed feedback and comments on submitted assignments, so that students experience the preparation, submission of written assignments, and subsequent marking and grading as a progressive learning process.

Fourth, since writing serves many purposes, such as reflection and exploration of ideas and concepts, drafting a case report, study, analysis, or presentation of data, it should be incorporated in the various study programs and not just in writing classes. Therefore, instructors need to develop writing skills in students across all educational disciplines.

Fifth, a guest speaker from the English department or student learning center might be invited to give a presentation about effective writing and common writing problems. Instructors who invite such experts reinforce the importance of good writing skills. Finally, Universities in Somalia need to change the intellectual culture on university campuses and challenge the students to express their ideas and opinions, whether verbally or in writing. Students need to understand that good writing skills are an essential part of communication skills, which do not only support their academic performance but their future career as well.

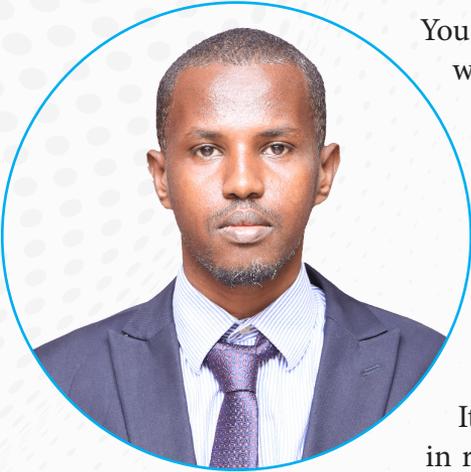
The ability to write well is a requirement across educational disciplines, and its benefits reach far beyond the exam hall. However, students graduating from the local universities continue to lack these essential skills. Educators and employers expressed their concern that Somali students graduate from university without being equipped with the basic skills to succeed in the marketplace. Institutions and educators must explore the reasons for students failing to learn acquire basic writing skills and whether their inability will contribute to diminished prospects after graduation.



Understanding the Question is Half the Answer

Mr. Ahmed Nur

Quality Assurance Officer



You may have heard of the phrase “a problem stated well is half solved,” but do you know of its relative, “understanding the question is half the answer” by the Socrates, the Greek philosopher? Surely, you have experienced something like this before. For example, telling your friends after an exam, “If I’d known what the question meant, I could have answered it!” Well, read on, and hopefully you will never need to say those words again.

It was in high school that I learned my very first lesson in reading the instructions. My teacher handed out a sheet titled “Can you follow instructions?” It contained 25 instructions, and the time limit was five minutes. The teacher promised a prize for the student who followed the instructions best, such as drawing circles, doing math equations, and shouting out loud “I’m the first person to reach this point!” While some of my peers were faithfully following the instructions, others just sat there and giggled. The first instruction was to do nothing and said, “Read everything carefully before doing anything.” The last instruction congratulated us for having finished reading the instructions and asked us to write our names on the paper. Unfortunately, I was one of those students who shouted, “I’m first!” which caused me a lot of embarrassment at the time. It was not a grave mistake such as failing my exam, or writing the wrong computer code, or worse, overdosing a patient. And here is what I learned then and never forgot: no matter the pressure you are under, reading the instructions carefully will save you a lot of effort, time, and your future.

Now that we know how to read the instructions carefully, next we should consider the layout of the exam paper because it provides you with a lot of clues. One overlooked clue is the type of question. Is it a multiple-choice question (MCQ), a short answer question, or essay? The difficulty with MCQs lies in the overwhelming number of questions on every topic imaginable. Often you can rule out two out of the four given options, which leaves only two that need to be seriously considered. Essay papers usually carry more weight, but they have fewer questions which need to be answered in more detail. If you are lucky, the examiner will give you a selection of questions, so choose wisely.

When carefully reading the exam questions, it is worth paying attention to certain keywords (e.g., describe, compare, analyze, evaluate). Every question expects you to perform a certain action, and you need to know which one. This can be either to define a piece of terminology, or to compare, contrast, analyze, evaluate, and describe. If you are expecting me to explain the difference between compare and contrast, then you are out of luck, as that is your homework for today. You cannot sit for an exam without knowing what these keywords mean. My advice to you is to spend some time learning these keywords, because they are the secret to understanding a question. Do not forget that understanding the question is half the answer.

But what if you find yourself in the exam room, ready and well-prepared, you have underlined all the keywords on the question paper, know the question type, but the question does not make any sense? Did the examiner make a mistake? You are stunned. What will you do? Give up, throw in the towel, put up your hand and raise a white flag? Or you could raise your hand and ask one of the invigilators for clarification. The faster you do this the better. The clock is ticking.

Finally, ask yourself, what the examiner wants you to do, expects you to do. Once you know what you are expected to do you can start doing it and answer the question. You have jumped over the last hurdle. No one sits for exams because they are fun. Exams are to test you and to give you the opportunity to show what you can do. You understand the subject, you master the technique, you can manipulate a garbled mess of data and turn it into something intentional and meaningful. So, go ahead and prove your worth. Move slowly but deliberately and present your answers in a structured and organized fashion. If your answer is a mess spilling all over the place, what does that show about what is in your head?

It is tempting to lose sight of the forest amid all those trees. The same is true with the topics you learn. However, the curriculum includes learning outcomes meaning what you should be able to do after learning the topic. So, do not forget that learning is not so much about knowing “what” is, rather than knowing “how” to do it. This is the last lesson I want you to take away from reading my thoughts about “understanding the question is half the answer.” Once I had sat for all my exams as a student, I realized that I had known all the exam questions before I even entered the exam hall. First, it was written in the course curriculum that I would be able to describe the process involved in X, Y, Z. Second, the questions in each chapter summary of my textbook already told me I had to know how to X, Y, Z. Third, my lecturer started every lecture saying, “Today we will learn how to do X, Y, Z.

Reading this you might ask yourself, is it not cheating to knowing the question before the exam? Trust me, it is not cheating, it is the road to success...

A Teacher's Boat is Not Well-Balanced

Mr. Rajab Noah

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'You cannot make an omelet without breaking eggs' goes the adage. To put it practically, teachers often find themselves between a rock and a hard place because they are expected to make omelets without breaking any eggs. Teaching is one of those professions that have become more challenging in modern days. To many people modern education means that teachers have to stop behaving like teachers if they want to teach successfully.

Let us travel down memory lane and remind ourselves of how teaching and learning was done in the past. In the old days a teacher was a celebrated know-it-all. He was the fountain of wisdom, a consultant and the proud owner of a bicycle to take him to school and back home. In the classroom, he would be the focus of the students' complete attention. His lessons would be conducted like one-way traffic, out of his mouth into the students' ears, rarely interrupted by even the most genuine questions. The teacher was the king and the classroom his kingdom. He held the monopoly of punishment and had the right to punish or pardon. He decided who was a good or bad student. He would decide which student would pass, and which would fail, but he could blame any failure on bad parenting, poor upbringing, or even bad genes. The teacher was revered by all people in the community and exonerated from any failure. Such was the teacher's world back then.

Today, in this digital world, we have woken up to the realization that the world has become a global village. The digital space has presented us with facilities for distance learning. The modern classroom is online, and the teacher is living in London teaching a student living in Mogadishu. The lesson will be conducted followed by evaluation and assessment.

As a professional teacher, I was taught along the lines of lesson planning, scheme of work, and teaching methodology and was often reminded that the best time to conduct a lesson is during contact hours when both teacher and student are physically present in the same classroom. A teacher would have to bring out his knowledge of psychology that he learnt in university to prepare the students for the lesson. Many things would have to be considered; for instance, adequate dressing style, hygiene, punctuality, and even sitting position and posture.

A professional teacher is trained to not only teach but to educate the learners. Teaching can take place within the four walls of a classroom but educating involves a whole lot more, such as instilling discipline. The teacher is expected to nurture future heads of state, ministers, corporate heads...It is also the teacher's duty to identify talent and encourage it to develop and blossom. There would not be great football stars like Messi and Ronaldo without someone recognizing their potential and training them when they were young. But much as the teacher nurtures talent, it is also his responsibility to identify bad traits in a learner and correct them before they become their second nature. Such bad traits like anger, envy, greed, and aggression can be treated if they are identified at an early age and corrected through counseling and firmness.

The old saying goes, 'Spare the rod and spoil the child.' Unfortunately, this useful instruction has lost its place and meaning in modern education. It is true that discipline goes hand in hand with education. However, relying on a cane or a stick to punish undisciplined students is not only wrong but also not effective enough. A successful teacher needs to be level-headed and able to apply appropriate methods of correction that are appropriate to the offence committed. Time between the commitment of the offence and the application of the correction is of utmost importance.

I know that some teachers reading this may ask how they would deal with their kind of unruly and defiant students. I like to remind them that they are equipped with the tool of counseling, not just the cane. Often, what we see in our learners reflects what they find at home. The children we teach are the mirrors of their home background. If a learner's behavior is overwhelmingly difficult, the teacher should arrange to meet with the parents or guardian, share the problem with them and find a solution. Usually, the knowledge a teacher gains from the guardian or parent will reveal the right approach to co-exist with your learner.

Basically, being a good teacher means reminding ourselves of the core values of education and its importance in society. There will always be discouraging voices and those who say that no teacher has ever become rich teaching, but teaching is first of all a service and a noble calling. The teaching career is not a get-rich-quick scheme. In fact, those who decide to become teachers to earn a decent living are in for a rude shock. That is why, after all, the prophets were the first teachers and they never accepted money in return for their efforts because they had higher aims.

In the end, with or without modern technology, a good teacher should never walk away from the basic principles of proper self-conduct, deliver content, being humble, showing simplicity within and outside the classroom, demonstrating good planning and integrity, being selfless, social and innovative. Those are the ethics that embodies the true fabric of a person called a teacher. However, do not become a teacher for financial gains and aim higher than that. For all those who still want to become teachers in the future, welcome aboard as we travel through the murky waters of the teacher's world.

Unified Secondary and Intermediate School Leaving Examinations in Somalia

Mr. Muse Omar Nur

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Education reform, improving the quality of education, and the search for solutions to the problems of the traditional education system has become the focus of modern society. It is the government's responsibility to secure strategic leadership for the education system as a whole, and to ensure that all the necessary elements are secured and functioning properly. However, due to the civil strife in the 1990s, Somalia's educational system has ceased to function.

In the late 1990s, many private schools and educational institutions were established. However, there was no unifying curriculum for these schools, which forced them to adopt curriculums from different countries. In their attempt to solve this situation, many private education umbrella organizations were established and began to coordinate among the associated schools through unifying the educational curriculum, supervision, and training new teachers.

Further, a group of educational associations and institutions based in Mogadishu established civil educational associations in 1998. First, these associations adopted the two prevailing educational systems from other Arab countries. Some institutions followed the 6, 3, 3 system which includes six years of primary education, three years of preparatory/intermediate education, and three years of secondary education, while other institutions followed the 4, 4, 4 system. The new system included monthly exams, mid-year exams, and final exams. After graduating from secondary school, most students enrolled in the newly established local universities, while students with financial backing continued their study overseas. In 2015, after 24 years of chaos and stagnation, the Somali government decided to combine the secondary school leaving examinations in south central Somalia. This step faced strong resistance from the private education organizations. In addition, the ministry of education and higher education in Somalia was criticized for its inability to unify examinations across all regions. The State of Puntland in the north and the self-declared secessionist Somaliland in the north-west rejected the unified examinations under the pretext that their educational policies were independent from the Federal Government.

Examinations were also unified in the intermediate stage in 2020; however, this unification was limited to the Banadir Governorate. This further indicates the difficulty faced by the federal government in its attempt to offer standard examinations across Somalia. It also demonstrated the divisions among the education management and the lack of a broad consensus.

Although the government made great efforts to standardize the examinations at the intermediate level, it still faced difficulties and challenges, the most important of which was the different school curriculums in Somalia. It was difficult to unify the different school examinations and curriculums, as most schools were relying on teaching systems adopted from other countries, such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Sudan, Egypt, and Kenya. Some schools had also switched to different media of instruction using English, Arabic, or both. Nevertheless, the Somali government eventually succeeded in developing a unified curriculum for all stages of primary and secondary education and cancelled the application of multiple curriculums in schools.

This unified curriculum incorporated the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the United Nations Children's Fund, and the updated version was approved by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education to be taught in all schools in the country starting from the academic year 2020/2021. However, once again, Somaliland and Puntland rejected to adopt the unified curriculum for high schools and insisted on using their own local curriculums. The ministry of education was also criticized for lack of competency in administering secondary school leaving examinations, as there were reported cases of leaked question papers and exam malpractice. Some critics argued that the ministry of education did not make the necessary effort to prevent such abuses, especially in regions far from the capital. Reports in newspapers indicated that students in remote regions had knowledge of the exam papers beforehand, and teachers were colluding with their students to answer questions in advance.

At this point I would like to offer recommendations on how to unify the secondary leaving examinations and prevent leaking of exam papers. First, the government should convince Puntland and Somaliland to become part of the current efforts to unify the examinations in Somalia. Second, standardized intermediate level examinations should be applied across the country. Third, examination committees consisting of experienced and impartial educators. Fourth, punitive measures should be taken on anyone found guilty of malpractice during examinations. Fifth, question papers should be released simultaneously in all parts of the country. Finally, use of communication devices and gadgets including smart phones should be closely monitored and controlled in all departments responsible for the examinations.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF POLITICAL STABILITY IN SOMALIA'S NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Dean, Faculty of Education and Humanities



Political conflicts have played a significant role in human history, and Somalia has its own share of political conflict. As a result of the breakdown of public order, our natural resources have become scarce, and years of political instability have affected our life which is marked by social and economic insecurity. We are aware that Somalia has experienced thirty years of political turmoil that has negatively impacted our political, economic, and social order, one of its many challenges being corruption. Many scholars have, therefore, urged to promote political stability to mitigate the negative impact of corruption on economic growth.

Corruption has a disastrous influence on a nation's socioeconomic and political system, directly as well as indirectly, as it diminishes the efficiency of public services and policies. Furthermore, it may cause public policies to be distorted and the maintenance of law and order to be hindered. Several developing countries in Asia and Africa have been identified as the most corrupt nations in the world, thanks to continued political instability and conflict.

The area that has been most affected by the scourge of war partnered with corruption in Somalia is the business sector. The local business community has lost complete confidence in this kind of hostile and unforgiving economic environment. Many investors have shied away from supporting local development projects, and big multinational corporations have tried in vain to obtain licenses to operate in profitable sectors like mining, oil and gas drilling, and fishing. However, only foreign investment in these sectors can propel this country forward to attain a basic level of economic prosperity. But with the aforementioned instability, corruption has reigned supreme, denying the needs of the majority while greasing the hands of a few.

Based on the above, it is obvious that political stability is a significant determinant of national development. To improve good governance, particularly democracy, the Somali government must focus on stabilizing its political environment, so as

to attract international investors who are confident to invest their capital into this country. Such a development would in turn result in increased revenue, increased employment, and Somalia's ability to take full advantage of its strategic location.

For instance, the marine sector has the potential to contribute a very high percentage to the national treasury. It can also ensure over 30 per cent of direct and indirect employment along the 3,333 km coastline. However, for this to happen, Somalia needs political stability.

Democracy is a proven method for a government to minimize the level of instability and risk of conflict, which also reduces corruption. Moreover, political stability can promote social as well as food security.

There are many theories that propose a political stability framework that allows a country to control these key factors. In my personal view, the ideal political stability model would support institutions to build a self-enforcing equilibrium. One of the most crucial factors for this model would be law-abiding citizens who defend the rule of law out of moral conviction, rather than fear or self-interest.

There is a general tendency among officials working in corruption-ridden countries to pay lip-service to rules and regulations, while secretly pursuing their own self-interest. Following common practice, policies are discussed in the boardroom and passed, so that government projects can be implemented. Tenders are publicly advertised, and interested parties make their submissions before the tender is awarded to the most deserving bidder. However, away from the public eye, wads of money exchange hands, and the tender is awarded not to the most deserving bidder but to the most ruthless of them. There is much public fanfare and state commissioning with a seemingly innocent announcement packaged with phrases like 'due diligence was followed to the letter'.

The South African author Alan Paton wrote about the ills that had befallen South Africa during the infamous apartheid era. However, not just South Africa but all of Africa would need to cry over this, for corruption has indeed festered like a sore on the whole continent. And when did the rain start beating us? The answer is obvious: on the day we chose to become violent; when we removed dialogue from our vocabulary; when we forgot the evening fire around which we sat and peacefully

The Trauma of Family Breakdown in Somalia

Mr. Omar Hussein Karie

Lecturer, Faculty of Education and Humanities



It is uncommon to find a Somali family that is not directly or indirectly exposed to trauma, separation, and divorce. We see this rising problem of preventable family breakdowns, knowing that most of these cases could have been resolved if there had been an early intervention to de-escalate the family conflict.

Family breakdown is often associated with substantial psychological, social, emotional, and financial strain. The effect of breakdown is felt mostly by women who have to look after their children without adequate economic and psychological help from their fathers. Men who have more access to jobs and women who are well-educated are more equipped to tackle the effects of family breakdown. In contrast, less educated women have fewer and more limited options to deal with this situation.

Unfortunately, most husbands stop supporting their children after the family breakdown, although they are legally required to pay for child support. This has a dire effect on divorced mothers, who are now suddenly faced with poverty and become dependent upon their relatives. Single parenting also has negative effects on children. Single parents often have less time for the general supervision and daily monitoring of their children and are forced to divert their energy to earn a living. It is no surprise, therefore, that children of single parents are more likely to display risky behaviors such as smoking, drinking, delinquency, and violence.

Family dissolution or breakdown has severe negative effects on the mental, physical, and socioeconomic well-being of the ex-spouses as well as the children. The number of fatalities, the prevalence of physical illness, suicides, violent crimes, homicides, and disease-related mortality increase in consequence. Family breakdown causes a change in all facets of the divorced parents' and their children's lives, regardless of the social status of their fathers in terms of cultural, economic, and other factors. Children in divorced families receive less emotional support, psychological, and practical support from their parents.

I wish to proceed by presenting some of the social, educational, behavioral, and economic effects of family breakdown in Somalia, followed by some

recommendations.

Social effects

Children and mothers are more likely to experience various socio-emotional issues. In Somali culture, children of divorced parents have the choice to live with one side of their family. Children who live with their relatives after their parents' divorce frequently experience social problems because their extended family feel increasingly burdened as their caregivers. The children struggle to have their basic needs met, such as clothing and other necessities. Additionally, the divorced parent is likely to experience loneliness and social isolation.

Educational Effects

After their parents' divorce, the affected children often struggle academically. They may not be able to focus on school while their parents are engaged in custody battles, and they have to move home. Sometimes, these children end up living with relatives or other caregivers and feel disoriented. This disruption to their family life has a significant and certainly negative impact on their academic development.

The children of divorced parents are also less likely to reach their full potential in life, and this is especially true of their personal development. The children may be overwhelmed by the ongoing family conflict and may not be able to fully participate in school activities, which has a detrimental impact on their ability to learn, relax, and socialize.

Behavioral Effects

Children and parents from broken families tend to suffer from behavioral problems such as frustration, anger and anxiety and externalize their distress in other ways (e.g., rebellion, delinquency, substance abuse). At the core of these negative emotions is the children's feeling of powerlessness and sometimes guilt and shame, as they try to rationalize their parents' divorce and wonder what they had done wrong to deserve this.

Economic Effects

Parents, children, and family members who experience family breakdown are faced with significant economic problems. Because of this, they are forced to spend more time and energy at work trying to make ends meet. Often, the girls end up doing the house chores and minding their younger sibling while their parent is at work, which means that they have less time to study and further their own prospects.

Recommendations

Here are some recommendations to help prevent the disintegration of families:

- Parents should remember their rights and obligations toward each other. There is a wealth of Islamic material available, including books and web articles.
- Pre-marital workshops should be organized to prepare couples for family life and instruct them in their respective rights and obligations. Additionally, to raise



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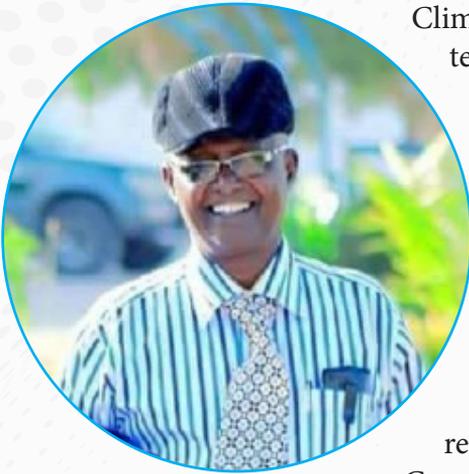
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Effects of Climate Change on Somalia

Dr. Mohamed Ahmed Kulane
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Climate change is defined as the change in the temperature, wind and precipitation of the environment. These changes do not occur naturally but are caused by human actions. The most common activity that causes these changes is the burning of fossil fuels that increases heat-trapping gasses in the Earth's atmosphere. When one drives a car or uses electricity uses energy from burning fossil fuels. Changes in the global temperature is called 'global warming' but the climate change results in rising sea-levels due to melting ice in Greenland, Antarctica, and the Arctic, changes in blooming patterns, and extreme weather conditions.

Global warming is one aspect of the current climate change. It is due to the increase in global temperature caused by the rising concentrations of greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere, such as carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide, methane, and CFCs that create a hole in the ozone layer.

Throughout the world climate change has caused more storms, floods, cyclones, droughts, forest fires, increase of ocean levels along with ecological problems of oceanic acidification and de- oxygenation. Forest areas and biodiversity (e.g., corals, insects, and mammals) are also under threat. These problems will increase and exacerbate if the challenges posed by climate change are not taken seriously and controlled.

Somalia, like many other countries, has been affected by climate change. In addition, Somalia is suffering from environmental degradation including sand dunes, recurrent droughts and floods, and deforestation as a result of charcoal burning. It is no doubt that the effects of this environmental degradation will worsen the degree of climate change experienced in Somalia.

In the local business sector, companies, organizations, factories and industrial entities have been affected by droughts. Somalia experienced five consecutive failed rainy seasons resulting in dried up wells and severe water shortage. Herders were forced to move further north where locals had dug up wells to provide their

livestock with drinking water. Unfortunately, many livestock were lost and subsequently livestock products have become scarce and expensive. In addition, agricultural output drastically declined, and the loss of produce and livestock resulted in an export slump. Irregular rainfall caused unforeseen changes in market stocks. In summary, commercial enterprises and business organizations must be aware of the economic impact of droughts and their risks and be ready to have strategies of protection.

In recent years, floods have occurred almost every rainy season in Somalia. The extent of damages caused by floods have increased. Floods caused many problems such as the devastation and destruction of towns, the eradication of agricultural farms and their crops, the spread of diseases such as malaria, and the displacement of thousands of people who were forced to migrate. Floods often occurred in the vicinity of the Jubba and Shabelle rivers.

In general, to mitigate climate change, the first step is to use more renewable energy sources such as solar, wind, rain, tides, waves, and geothermal heat, and ban the production of energy from burning fossil fuels. Somalia is blessed with an average of 8.26 hours of sunshine every day, and with little cloud cover and little variation in monthly sunshine hours, solar energy is a great renewable resource. In addition to changing the types of energy we produce, we must also restructure our way of living; even if the energy comes from a renewable source, it is still not carbon neutral and still contributes to climate change. We need to adjust our way of life to overcome these growing challenges brought by the climate change. For this to happen we have to create a global culture of progress, where energy production is more sensible and efficient. As a start, we need to select the products we buy and consume responsibly because our demand as consumers influences the supply.

If Somalia wants to reduce the impact of climate change and prevent more droughts, our water need to be increased. More water catchments need to be created for the rainy season, large areas for reservation land needs to be fenced off during periods of drought, drought-affected areas need to be reforested, and domestic animals need to be resettled to increase their production quality, at the expense of nomadic herding. These measures will help reduce the impact of droughts and floods. As far as floods are concerned, we must excavate the rivers and construct agricultural canals in order to prevent floods in the rainy seasons. Also, we have to create retention areas, and better conditions for the

EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON SOMALIA



A Hidden Learning Difficulty

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If you are a lecturer at university or a teacher at school or Madrasa, it is possible that you have come across a student who seems to be intelligent and creative, in the technical as well as artistic sense. But at the same time, the same student tends to have difficulties in memory which affects comprehension, note-taking, and recall of facts and formulas. Additionally, when the student reads a text, he/she seems to be slow and inefficient. The student may have troubles in writing and has limited vocabulary, poor syntax, grammar and structure. When asked to spell a word, the student is inconsistent with omission of letters and syllables, and this might mask the original meaning. Furthermore, the student may also tend to mispronounce words when speaking. In this scenario, the learning difficulty that should come to mind here is dyslexia.

Academic studies on the specific origin of dyslexia are still ongoing, yet many experts in the field believe that dyslexia is hereditary and neurological in origin. It is often referred to as a ‘hidden learning difficulty’ because it does not have outwardly visible signs that easily indicate to others that there is an issue. Additionally, some scholars describe dyslexia as ‘word blindness’ because the dyslexic person does not seem to ‘see’ the words and letters correctly, even though his/her eye vision is perfect. Nevertheless, dyslexia is not attributed to a lack of intelligence. It exists across alphabetic languages in the world and tends to affect more boys than girls. Additionally, dyslexia cannot be treated through diet, exercise, or drugs. Instead, children with dyslexia can have the best outcome when dyslexia is identified at an early age and the dyslexic student receives support from expert educators who use explicit, structured, and systematic instruction in basic language skills.

In terms of prevalence, various studies have shown dyslexia is more prevalent among males than females, with an approximate ratio of 3:1, although recently this data has been challenged. Worldwide estimates of dyslexia vary from around 10 per cent to 17.5 per cent of the population. However, different countries have different prevalence rates. In the USA, the prevalence among children is five to 17 per cent, in the UK it is three to six per cent, and in Europe, the prevalence is as

high as 15 per cent of the population. Comparatively, in China, the prevalence of dyslexia is below four per cent. Unfortunately, in most countries in Africa, there is little data on the prevalence of dyslexia in the continent, although it is believed to be around eight per cent.

In Somalia, the prevalence of dyslexia is not known. Surprisingly, there are no academic studies relating to dyslexia in schools and universities in Somalia. This discovery has motivated me to write this article with the purpose to help generate more awareness of this learning difficulty in the local schools and universities.

Imagine the pressure felt when an undiagnosed dyslexic student is expected to understand, remember, listen and write by him/herself. At the same time, the student's teacher or lecturer is ignorant of this learning difficulty and may ascribe the student's lack of progress to his/her lack of intelligence or effort. In addition, trained staff to diagnose students with dyslexia are not available. Such a scenario also includes the student's parents who might be frustrated and worried about their child's prospects in life. In this case, educators at all levels of education have the moral obligation to recognize students with dyslexia and have various kinds of resources at hand to intervene and help the dyslexic students to succeed academically.

Although learners with dyslexia neither tend to catch up nor improve their reading skills with time, early identification and subsequent early intervention can enable them to deploy alternative methods to improve their reading skills from an early age. If a student with dyslexia does not receive the right support at the right time, he/she may become too frustrated with the difficulty and simply give up. The student may develop signs of depression and low self-esteem, become unmotivated, and eventually drop out of school; therefore, the student's chances to lead a success life and attain his/her goals may be jeopardized if his/her dyslexia remains unidentified and untreated.

Hence, schools should arrange continuous workshops and seminars for lecturers and teachers concerning hidden learning difficulties including dyslexia. This would equip lecturers and teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to provide special needs education for students with learning difficulties. Somalia's universities should do more research on dyslexia if they are serious about the academic welfare of their students in order to identify the magnitude of the condition in the country.



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