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COMMUNITY ASSUMES THE ROLE OF STATE IN EDUCATION IN STATELESS SOMALIA

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INTRODUCTION

Formal education is closely associated with the modern state as one of its primary responsibilities. This is because education is seen by virtually all societies as a key modernizing factor and shaper of national identity. It is also seen as a builder of human capital for economic growth, as well as social capital for social cohesion (Gradstein, Justman, & Meier, 2005; Waters & Leblanc, 2005). Indeed, many states did discharge their duties, at least to some extent, in giving financial and technical support to schools.

While it is arguably true that some other states have failed miserably in this regard, they nonetheless still want to claim this credit for themselves. However, with the failure of many states, this link between states and education is no longer inevitable (Bray & Lillis, 1988; Meyer, 2001; Williams & Cummings, 2005). Market forces, private individuals, and groups can and do establish schools, sometimes even more efficiently than the state, but the state's role is often felt when it comes to the provision of education to the marginalized section of the society, such as girls, minorities, the poor, and people with disabilities. Recognizing the role played by religious institutions and market forces in pioneering the early schools, Fuller & Rubinson (1992) argued that:

The state plays a strong role in constructing the school institutions under a variety of conditions. Governments around the world spend enormous amount of resources to boost the supply of classrooms and teachers, sparking even greater legitimacy and popular demand for more schooling among disenfranchised groups. (p. 3)

The role of the state in establishing educational institutions and sometimes forcing parents to enroll their children in schools is partially based on the duty of the state to protect children and minors, thereby acting as their guardian (West, 1994).

This dominant role of the state in providing education sharply contrasts the situation in pre-industrial societies where the community or re-

ligious authorities were mostly in charge of schooling. Throughout history until the twentieth century, the state had little or no role in education at all. Education in the sense of schooling was mainly provided by community organizations, such as religious societies or other voluntary agencies. In some instances, even state education systems, as in many colonial systems, were largely based on community input (Bray, 2003). State involvement in education sought to expand the limited scope of community-run education and put more emphasis on the economic and social, rather than religious, significance of education (Gradstein et al., 2005). Obviously, this change is more pronounced in the industrial societies than in the less industrialized societies where the state is less effective in providing social services, such as health and education.

For a variety of humanitarian and ideological reasons, the role of the state in education was greatly expanded in the twentieth century to the extent that in some jurisdictions, the state's role was not only dominant but exclusive. However, the role of the community in providing education or at least participating in it has since come back to the fore. Part of the reason for this reinvigorated community role in education is to share the financial burden with the state, which is increasingly becoming unable to provide essential social services such as education and health care (Bray, 2003).

Education in emergencies is a good example of how a bottom-up approach of intervention can be implemented in the local community, because emergency education is largely community-centered. Most emergency educators are local professionals working for little or no pay, volunteering as members of the war-affected communities (Sommers, 2002). In addition to addressing basic and immediate educational needs of the victims, emergency response should also contain elements of long-term rebuilding of education system. Training must go hand-in-hand with rehabilitation of destroyed infrastructures. Community participation and ownership of the process is indispensable (Retamal, Devadoss & Richmond, 1998). Education can also contribute to the safety of the community, because those communities that have schools would feel that they have important investment worth protecting (Sommers, 2002).

CONTEXT

The crisis in education in Somalia is manifold, to say the least. The civil war that broke out in the early 1990s dealt a deadly blow to the education system. The turmoil completely destroyed all education infrastructures. School buildings were destroyed, educational equipment and materials were looted, many students, teachers, and administrators were displaced,

and still others were either killed or maimed as a result of the war. As a result of persistent insecurity and lack of central or regional governance, almost all schools were closed at the beginning of the war and when, as part of subsequent relief and rescue operations in the country, local and international NGOs tried to revive the education process, they could open very few schools due to insecurity and logistical problems.

For almost two decades now, the vast majority of children of school-going age in Somalia have not had any form of organized schooling. It is true that even in such situations some form of learning does take place, simply because the society has to go on with its social life, including educating younger generations. However, some observers are worried that with no organized schooling in place and no state regulation of whatever learning that is taking place, there is a real danger that such education might only contribute to more social destruction if children and young adults are left to the mercy of informal education. But informal education can sometimes enhance social development. Here, informal education means "what is randomly learned from the general societal situations" (Abdi, 1998, p. 336).

As a consequence of the civil war, hundreds of thousands of Somali children have since missed out on the opportunity to go to school. The country is facing a bleak future if this situation is not somehow reversed, because a whole generation or more are likely to be raised without any formal education. Sadly but understandably, these unschooled youths are the ones roaming the streets today fighting, killing, and looting the country. It is even more alarming that the majority of combatants in the warring militias were either born during the civil war or were very young when it broke out and thus have no knowledge of the meaning and importance of peaceful life. At this rate, the overwhelming majority of the next generation will be illiterate for lack of proper schooling and there is little doubt that the cycle of violence will continue, because a whole generation with no access to education, which also lost the link to traditional ways of life including age-old traditional conflict resolution mechanisms, is unlikely to have any respect for human life and dignity and will continue to engage in acts of destruction. With the frequent failure of political peace and reconciliation conferences, education is the only way of restoring hope to the young generation of Somalia.

In order to achieve any meaningful rehabilitation of Somalia's educational infrastructure, concerted efforts by Somalis as well as by the international community should be made to revive and develop the country's basic education system. This must go along with similar efforts to revive the economic, political, and other social institutions. With only about 15% of the country's

school-age children in some form of quasi-formal structures of learning (Abdi, 2003), it is clear that without full-fledged educational programs, the country's development prospect is in serious doubt, to put it mildly.

Interestingly, traditional pre-colonial education methods survived the destruction, despite enormous political, economic, and security problems facing the whole nation. This situation, as tragic as it is, might offer a ray of hope that in reconstructing the education system, lessons might be learned, community inputs taken into account, and the local value systems incorporated into the new system. Ever since the collapse of the central authority and breakdown of law and order, some courageous individuals and organizations, both local and international, have been involved, in collaboration with the local community, in the task of educating the younger generation (Raghe 1997). Nevertheless, the situation remains grave.

In this emergency, educational rehabilitation efforts need to address a multitude of problems such as children traumatized by the war, women and youth in distress, destroyed school infrastructure, lack of standardized curriculum and lack of trained teachers, among other things. Also for the purpose of sustainability, any meaningful education will have to seek community participation and ownership (Bennaars, Seif, & Mwangi, 1996). The latter point is vital at this point in time due to the prevailing security situations in the country.

International aid agencies, attempting to rehabilitate education in Somalia, have often complained of not getting the necessary community support, and there are plenty of incidents to support the complaint. I believe the problem might be because the NGOs have tried to deal with non-effective or non-existent entities—sometimes understandably due to security concerns—whereas they should have been liaising with the local community at the school or neighborhood level. This might mean a logistic nightmare for the agencies involved but it is the only viable option in the present circumstances. Local Somali NGOs have on many occasions initiated an effort to work closely and form consortiums for better service delivery (Raghe, 1997). A more successful cooperation with the local community was achieved in refugee camps where Somali refugees fled, like Kenya, Ethiopia, Djibouti, and Yemen. With the security of the refugees taken care of by the host countries, which normally neither contribute to nor interfere in the running of education for refugees, international NGOs have implemented schools through cooperation with the local refugee community (Gezelius, 1996). In an example of cooperation between international aid agencies and local communities, Save the Children Federation/U.S.-implemented UNHCR-funded programs to provide teacher training in non-formal education for

out-of-school youth and support for *Quranic* schools and other learning facilities for Somali refugee in camps in eastern Ethiopia (Sinclair, 2002).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Social Capital

The phenomenon of community members assuming the responsibility of organizing schools in the absence of the state can be understood within the social capital theoretical framework in which informal social networks play an important role (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 1995). Likewise, the phenomenon of civil society that has recently witnessed a boom all over the world in the form of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), goes a long way in helping understand the issue (Mundy & Murphy, 2001). Social capital refers to social networks that bind community members together and that individuals and groups can rely on in times of crisis. Attempting to define the concept of social capital, Putnam (2000) said:

Social capital refers to connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. In that sense social capital is closely related to what some have called “civic virtue”. The difference is that “social capital” calls attention to the fact that civic virtue is most powerful when in a dense network of reciprocal social relations. A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital. (p. 19)

However, while social networks are useful to individuals who access them, the same can be used for bad or even destructive purposes, as in the case of criminal organizations and other destructive social groups. Furthermore, since social networks are not accessed equally by all, the fruits of social capital may benefit only some sections of the society (Field, 2003). This means that social capital does not always help in alleviating inequality.

As we shall see in the following pages, education contributes, in peace time and war time, to the cultivation of human capital as well as social capital of the society. It is in this light that this article seeks to explore the close interplay between education and the community in the present-day stateless Somalia.

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative research techniques were employed in this study to observe and interact with participants in their natural settings in order to make sense of their lives and the social reality around them (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). It was conducted in some of the educational facilities or learning settings that are functioning and offering some form of education to the public since the outbreak of the civil war in Somalia. These include primary

and secondary schools and those privately run institutions of higher learning that operate in different parts of the country.

In order to explore how the Somali community has coped or is coping with the unusually difficult situation of statelessness and civil war, a descriptive case study of the educational institutions was carried out. A combination of in-depth interviews, participant observation, and focus group discussions was utilized for this purpose. The participants in the study were 27 individuals selected from among the people who are currently involved in the process of education, such as teachers, students, school administrators, and other educational practitioners, as well as parents and community leaders. The criteria of selection was based on how closely the individual was involved in or concerned about the educational process. Educators' past experiences were also taken into account. The selection of participants also involved what is known as the snowball technique, which allows for making additional contacts based on recommendations from participants (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

It will become clear from the narratives below that although the situation was extreme most of the time throughout the long years of the civil war, the community is resilient and the educational institutions that have been put together are functioning, albeit minimally. To a large extent, the present educational institutions represent a real innovation on the part of the community in dealing with the unprecedented situation. Today's schools are all privately run. This means that there is generally no coordination in how they are organized and what they teach. Consequently, they vary in many respects.

A recent report has categorized most of the current private schools into six categories:

1. Charity assisted schools. These are schools that provide modern education with either Arabic or English as the medium of instruction. Although heavily subsidized, most of these schools charge nominal fees.
2. Schools owned and run by former public school teachers. These are self-sufficient schools that get no external support from charities or aid agencies. They also charge fees to maintain themselves.
3. Schools for poor students. These schools serve students who cannot afford the nominal fees charged by other schools. This type of school is common in rural areas and poorer neighborhoods in major cities.
4. Adult schools. These are private schools that charge fees and teach adult learners basic reading and writing in Somali, arithmetic, and foreign language literacy.

5. Vocational and technical schools. These schools train students in specific skills that will help them get gainful employment.
6. Schools supported by external aid. These are schools that are supported by international aid agencies. They mostly target poorer sections of the community. Among these agencies are Concern Worldwide, International Aid Sweden-IAS and Save the Children Fund-UK (*Somalia: Path to recovery building*, 2004).

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION: VIEWS OF THE EDUCATORS

Modern education is closely associated with the state in most developing nations because not only was it part of the package of colonial legacy left behind by European colonial powers but also because it is the state that can guarantee the welfare of the marginalized people, including children. After a few decades of independence these nations began to face difficult development issues and found themselves increasingly hard-pressed on the economic front to continue providing 100% support to educational institutions. In order to avert the crisis, many nations resorted to spreading the burden by encouraging self-help and community support schemes to share educational financing, among other responsibilities. Similarly, religious bodies have played a prominent role in supporting education. This restored some of their traditional roles before it was taken away by the colonial power and independent national governments (Bray & Lillis, 1988).

The return of community involvement in education in Somalia came late and was rather abrupt when the state collapsed. The role of the state was not only weakened, but it completely disappeared, and the community had to step in and assume the responsibility. Community involvement began modestly and expanded later. Following is what one of the educators, Ahmed Abdullahi, said about the process:

The role of the community began minimally by helping to secure and defend educational sites from militias. Then, they started sending their children to the school. Eventually, they became involved and became members of school boards. Now, the parents are the owners of the school and they contribute to any development projects that the school may need. (personal communication, December 2004)

It appears that the community did not realize the crisis would last this long and were hoping that the state would soon be reestablished. Thus, their involvement in organizing the school was only of a temporary nature, but when the problem dragged on for years, some form of arrangement had to be made to provide the services that the state used to provide. This was exactly what happened according to the principal of Hamar Boarding School:

“When the people saw that no state was not forthcoming, they organized themselves and took up the responsibility of establishing education for their children, because children are the future and should be educated while still young” (Abdirahman Sheikh, personal communication, December 2004). Similarly, because the state used to provide for education and parents were not used to taking part in school administration in any shape, the culture of paying school fees and paying close attention to school curriculum was alien to them and they had to learn it gradually. To illustrate this gradual process of community involvement in education, Farah Abdulqadir had this to say:

When we were starting to set up schools we used to ask parents to bring their children but they had a big doubt about whether education can be restarted and, thus, would not bring their children. Parents were forced to bring their children to enroll in school in order to get food rations from relief agencies. So, the first to enroll used to be given food, clothes and books. Then the time has come when parents were told to pay school fees for the education of their children. (personal communication, January 2005)

Gradually, parents and the community at large came to realize that they had to change their mindset and rely on themselves in providing education for their children. This is a major shift in perception that is taking place in the community, as this school principal put it: “The traditional perception of leaving modern schools to state is changing and the society is showing interest in how schools are run and what is taught there” (Abdulmajid Hassan, personal communication, November 2004). This shift in perception is being felt by educators in the way schools interact with parents and the larger community. Commenting on this, a teacher described parental contribution to education as follows:

Parents want education for their children but they want the state to provide schooling for them. Schools have formed parents committee and school committee, comprising of the principals, teachers and some parents. The school’s relations with the parents and the community are good. They normally contribute to school development whenever needed. The situation is improving and the community is showing understanding of the need for education. (Mustafa Maalim, personal communication, December 2004)

It appears from this comment that the contribution is modest but shows signs of improvement. This is exactly how educators feel in general about community participation in school affairs.

Once the culture of community ownership of schools became ingrained in the community psyche, there was no need for external motivators and the community discharged its responsibility towards schools. “All aspects of school administration, teaching and planning were done by the com-

munity which is a new concept in education in Somalia" (Ahmed Abdullahi, personal communication, December 2004). Community ownership of schools is not only seen as a viable option but also as sustainable, because once schools are locally owned and managed, the community would become self-sufficient in resources and management. This was exactly the view of a school principal when he said: "The future of education in Somalia will be better than ever, because today's education is established and managed by the community. An education that is owned by the community is better than one forced on them by outsiders" (Abdulmajid Hassan, personal communication, November 2004).

In taking care of education in the absence of the state, the Somali community's traditional role in organizing and managing *dugsi Quranic* schools came in handy. It was easy for the community to connect to and comprehend such a role, which it has played for centuries without help from the state. "Now that the state collapsed, the society realized that we need to go back to the old system of educational administration. The community is now responsible for modern schools as it was responsible for Islamic education" (Ahmed Abdullahi, personal communication, 2004).

The usefulness of community and parental involvement in school affairs need not be emphasized in any context, particularly in the present-day Somalia, where the state that used to regulate and enforce laws no longer exists. The community can assume the role of law enforcement and the role of regulation, in addition to the role of financing schools. As an example of a typical role of parents in school, Abdirahman Sheikh said:

There are parent committees that are consulted on many matters related to school management. For instance, they are consulted on matters concerning curriculum contents and textbooks; they are consulted on economic issues such as fundraising and, more importantly since there are no courts of law, they are consulted on cases of conflict resolution among students and families. (personal communication, December 2004)

Likewise, Ahmed Abdullahi gives similar reasons why communities should be encouraged to take a more active role: "The idea that the school belongs to the community should be encouraged, because if the community owns the school they would hold the administration accountable and they would maintain the school properly" (personal communication, December 2004). Community participation is more important today now that the role of the state in education is missing. That is why educators think that the society has actually begun to fill the vacuum. Commenting on this point, Mohamed Tohow, a senior official of one of the leading educational umbrella organizations, said:

I believe the Somali people have understood the value of education. They have realized that they own the schools. That's why they sacrifice their time and wealth in supporting schools, because there is no state. I believe that even if there is a state that establishes schools, many people would still prefer private schools, because this kind of education is of high quality since teachers and students are better supervised and parents want quality education for their children. (focus group discussion, December 2004)

It is important to bear in mind that in order for the community members to support education, they must trust the institution that provides it and the educators who are in charge of it. It was clear from concerns expressed by many educators I talked to that the people would support schools and teachers only if they are happy with the contents of education being provided to their children. One educator put it this way:

If parents do not trust the education, because of fear for their children's religion or culture, they would not send their children to school and would not support the school. If parents send their children to school where they do not trust the education they only do it to keep them off the street. (Ahmed Abdullahi, personal communication, December 2004)

A related question that I asked teachers and school administrators was as follows: To what extent, if any, do Somali businesspeople take part in funding education in the country? To my surprise, I was told consistently that not many of them contribute to this cause. One explanation for this is that the idea of fundraising for public causes is relatively new to the Somali mindset and wealthy individuals may contribute to clan and family welfare but not so much to services that are shared by the whole community. For example, Hassan Sheikh, the dean of one of the higher education institutes in Mogadishu, said positively that businesspeople do not contribute in any form or shape:

Businesspeople do not contribute to financing education because they don't see investing in schools makes business sense. Many Somali businesspeople are not educated themselves. So, they don't quite see the benefits of education. I do not think they are contributing to education financing and they are unlikely to do so, because the culture of investing in schools is simply not there. They invest in health institutions but not in schools. (focus group discussion, December 2004)

Similarly, Farah Abdulqadir thinks that "The role of businesspeople is very limited, because the present education is not profitable and it is hard for schools to be financially self-sufficient. So, any investment in it will have little or no returns" (personal communication, January 2005). I was, however, told that this attitude is starting to change now. Abdirahman

Sheikh described fundraising and donating for public causes as

an area where the Somali society is lagging behind and this is because they are not familiar with the concept of fundraising for public interest. It is not in the Somali culture. They can easily understand clan mobilization for the purpose of war but not for the public interest. It is only now that few of them are beginning to learn. (personal communication, December 2004)

I also explored the contribution of another increasingly important segment of the Somali community—those communities in the diaspora, mostly in Western Europe, Australia, and North America, but previously in the Middle East as well—in supporting education back in the country. It is clear from today's socioeconomic conditions for all Somali families that remittances from those communities are crucial to keep them going. Families not only use the remittances in purchasing daily necessities but also in paying school fees for their children and in security, among other things. Some of the schools I visited were established with contributions by communities abroad or by individuals who came back from abroad and invested in educational institutions. Underscoring the increasing role of the Somalis in the diaspora in nation building, especially setting up educational institutions, Farah Abdulqadir said:

The role of the Somalis in the Diaspora now appears to be increasing compared to the past. There are few schools in some regions which have been set up with the support of members of the community living in the diaspora who would raise funds for that purpose. Communities have begun competing in raising money for school construction. (personal communication, January 2005)

The importance of the Somalis in the diaspora is being felt in all sectors of the socioeconomic development. This means that even if the communities in the diaspora do not set up schools, their support will still be felt in the education sector through parental contribution by paying fees or otherwise, because a significant portion of the present-day Somali economy is based on remittances from Somali immigrant communities abroad. Thus, it remains a significant source of support for schools. This is what Ahmed Abdullahi, a senior official of one of educational umbrella organizations, meant when he said: "It has been noticed that the majority of school children are from poor families who are supported by a family member abroad" (focus group discussion, December 2004).

Emphasizing this point also, Mukhtar Gedi said:

I also believe that the Somali communities abroad contributed a great deal to the success of education in the country. The school fees that parents pay mostly come from a family member or relative abroad. The fact that the soci-

ety understood the value of education which is seen as a way out of the current crisis and that they are willing to pay for it has contributed to the success. (personal communication, December 2004)

This development is seen by many as a hopeful sign, because a large number of Somalis, who fled the country mainly due to the civil war, now live abroad and their remittances are a major source of economic development in the country. Many people are optimistic that this source of income will also be a good source for schools. As Farah Abdulqadir put it:

There will also be a new interest in private education by individuals from abroad or by business people who feel that at the moment the security atmosphere is not suitable for investing in education and would only jump in the ownership of private education when there is a state and security. (personal communication, January 2005)

This optimism is likely to grow when a large number of these diaspora communities come back home, because they will bring their children to the country and they will have to get involved even more. This involvement in education by the communities abroad is seen as growing and if the trend continues, there would likely be a big increase in quality and quantity of schools in the country. "There will be a new private education that would cater for the needs of the children of the large Somali communities in the Diaspora" (Farah Abdulqadir, personal communication, January 2005).

Community participation in education, especially in financing, obviously depends on their economic condition. Therefore, the involvement of certain impoverished communities would be limited. This is particularly true in rural communities and marginalized regions. This is what a school principal in Bakool Region said about the problem: "I believe that it would be difficult to continue any education, because teachers alone cannot shoulder the responsibility and the community in the region is not playing its role by supporting the teachers" (Sheikh Omar, personal communication, December 2004). When I probed him further, he acknowledged that it is now possible that the situation might change, because people see that the world has changed and they too must change. It seems now that the culture of sharing the cost of education and paying school fees is beginning to be understood. He said some aid agencies are asking the community to contribute to the reconstruction cost of schools so that they could protect their schools from looting in future, because if community members invest in schools they will protect them.

ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: POSSIBILITIES FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

It is obvious that there is a great deal of disruption to public life, including schools. However, according to Menkhaus (1998), Somalia is in a state of statelessness but not in anarchy. This means that local communities have devised a wide range of strategies to cope with the protracted state collapse and to ensure that essential elements of governance are made available to the community. Even in the political arena, which is the most problematic, the community managed to rely on a variety of mechanisms, including the age-old clan system, to facilitate the running of local political administration. With the exception of the breakaway republic of Somaliland in the northwest and the regional state of Puntland in the northeast, most political decisions are made at the local level. Perhaps it is this local nature of decision making that kept the otherwise fluid situation from deteriorating into a complete anarchy.

The social capital resources of the Somali communities are the families, clan networks, and Islam. Unlike the modern state, these institutions are not likely to disintegrate. This, precisely, is the coping mechanism that the community resorted to for survival when the state collapsed. Exploring the extent to which indigenous social institutions remained intact in post-colonial Somalia, Hashim (1997) concluded that the Somali people are resilient and have the capability to reorganize and restructure their society to build a new state. But they may need a new formula of government that allows major clan families self-rule. The international community should play a supportive rather than a dominant role in the process of rehabilitating Somalia. Similarly, Adam and Ford (1998) said that "Islam can build cultural cohesiveness and solidarity" (p .21). This is where the community's traditional role in organizing and maintaining the *dugsi Quranic* schools came in handy, because this institution was not only culturally appropriate to the people but was cost-effective and sustainable at the same time. It was the local community, at the village, hamlet, or nomadic settlement level, that has always catered for this type of education without outside support. The absence of the state, understandably, has little effect on its continuation. This realization has guided educators, school leaders, and the community to cope with the situation.

It would be an exaggeration to say that the community has assumed full responsibility for education and that the situation is sustainable. However, there are signs that the people have realized that they must **rely on** themselves. This is evident from the growing number of schools in urban

centers, such as Mogadishu, where most businesses are also to be found. However, it is only fair to state that any mention of achievement in education in Somalia during the years of civil war should be read within the context of the statelessness and persistent insecurity. It would be hard to draw comparisons with any other period of Somali history or with other nations. If we want to evaluate education in Somalia, **we should take the current context into consideration.** One would appreciate that having any kind of education under such conditions is a great achievement.

Education was free, **and compulsory at the primary level, before the collapse of the state,** but both parents and students lacked the desire for education. In contrast, people's passion for education is very strong today as indicated by their resilience and the many schools that they have set up, against all odds. It is true that access to schooling is low but that was caused by the exceptionally difficult conditions of today. It is regrettable that there are many children who are out of school because they could not afford to pay school fees. **This is particularly true in the outlying regions and among the nomadic communities,** and it is a serious problem that requires a whole new strategy to increase the access to education among these communities. Educators in some of these regions, where I visited, have made it clear that their communities cannot tackle this problem without outside help.

It is clear from the present situation that community involvement in education is the only viable option left for Somalia since the state **has collapsed and no other entity is offering alternative public education at the moment.** The role of the state not only weakened but completely disappeared and the community had to step in and assume the responsibility. In doing so, the community is borrowing a leaf from the traditional role in managing the *dugsi Quranic* schools. It is easy for the community to comprehend such a role, which it has played for centuries without state involvement. Community and parental involvement in school affairs is particularly useful in the present context of statelessness. The community can assume the role of law enforcement, conflict resolution, and regulation, in addition to financing schools. Community involvement in education is all the more crucial today now that the role of the state in education is missing. It is in this light that educators think that the society has actually begun to fill the vacuum left by the state. From security points of view, it is crucial that the society takes ownership of schools, so that if, and when, necessary, they can protect schools as they protect their own properties.

In what Freire (1981) called "political pedagogy," community participation in education can achieve the desired objectives if it is consciously

planned and carried out, because education “has to serve national reconstruction by helping the country face challenges and overcome difficulties ... this means critical and creative participation by the people in the process of reinventing their society” (p. 28). Even if the current practices only represent efforts of an emergency nature, the community should critically consider these as acts of liberation of mind and institutions. Thus, whatever variables are involved in today’s education and the resources at hand, it should be taken as an opportunity to reconstruct the nation on a sound basis.

As a conceptual framework, the following two diagrams are intended to serve as models to simplify the relations between various players in the education process in Somalia and different layers of schooling that children in this society normally undergo. The first model relates to the situation that existed before the state collapsed. The second model illustrates the relations between different schools and various actors after the collapse. Actors in the process of education are, more or less, the family/community, civil society organizations or NGOs/international aid agencies and the state. The different layers of schools that Somali children normally go to are: traditional education, which is part of the cultural upbringing of children by the family and community, *dugsi Quranic* schools, and modern schools.

FIGURE 1
Relations Between Schools and Various Actors in Education before the State Collapse

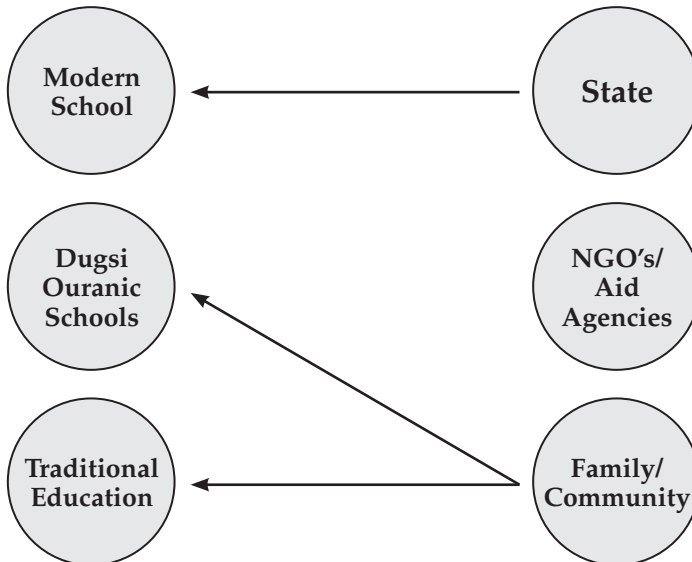
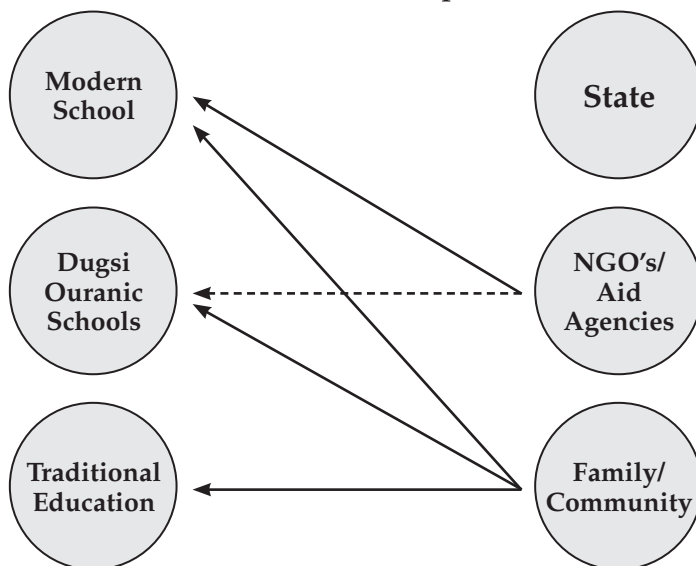


FIGURE 2
Relations Between Schools and Various Actors in Education
after the State Collapse



In both diagrams, the solid arrows indicate that ownership, management, and financial relations exist between the actors and the schools, whereas dotted arrows indicate only partial support by the actor for the schools.

The models show that role of the community in education has increased since the state collapse. Whereas it was limited to traditional education and *dugsi Quranic* schools before the state collapse, it is now prominent in all forms of education, including formal education. Another new phenomenon is the involvement of NGOs and international aid agencies in education, mainly in supporting modern schools but also occasionally giving some support to *dugsi Quranic* schools as well. The total absence of any role for the state in today's education, as shown in the second diagram, is in sharp contrast to its dominant role in providing modern education before its collapse.

But why is education emerging in Somalia today and why would anyone think of schools under these conditions? I believe the answer to this question lies in the expectation of the Somali society of their state when it was there and of their children even when the state that used to provide them with education is no longer there. Like in many other nations in Africa and elsewhere, the Somali state promised to provide its people with education as a major part of the fruits of independence. Although

this promise was never fulfilled to the maximum, some progress was made in setting up schools for a large section of the population, especially during the first 10 years of the military rule in the 1970s. What this means to the Somali people now is that the state that had promised education has disintegrated after they—at least some of them—have seen the perceived benefits of education. This new reality forced the society to do, by themselves, what the state used to do for them, i.e., the provision of education. This was seen as a necessity that needs to be tackled in the wake of the state collapse but as the situation persisted, it was interesting to note that people felt that the realization of statelessness encouraged them to be self-sufficient in managing their public affairs, including education.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is clear that, despite the persistent security problem, the community has shown a remarkable **resilience and the educational institutions** that they put together are functioning, albeit minimally, and this trend is set to continue even if the **current stateless situation continues for the next few years**. Ever since the disintegration of the central state in 1991, attempts at reconstituting the state have not ceased and the latest conference held in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2004 resulted in the current fledgling transitional federal government. Precisely because of that, few people expect the state to provide for schools in any significant way for a long time to come.

Moreover, many people in many regions and in the countryside cannot afford to pay for the cost of schools due to economic hardships. At the moment, the dominant view in these regions is that unless the state is re-established soon, schools would remain in the poor state that they are in today. Therefore, aid agencies and business people should give more support to schools in these areas in order to boost access to education, because it is in these areas that the majority of the population lives.

The current problem is mind-boggling and requires ingenuity to come up with solutions acceptable to all. The only consolation is, perhaps, that the Somali society has a unique opportunity to have a fresh start at rebuilding state institutions untainted with the past incompetent and corrupt practices. Schools are some of a few public service institutions that have been revived by private individuals or organizations, and it is heartening to see that, at least in this case, the community is caring for the public good. The present crisis has shown that the pre-war educational system was poorly managed, irrelevant, discriminatory, biased towards the urban population and certainly not respectful of the Somali people's will and aspirations.

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