CONSTRUCTING EDUCATION IN A STATELESS SOCIETY:
THE CASE OF SOMALIA

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Abstract

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CONSTRUCTING EDUCATION IN A STATELESS SOCIETY: THE CASE OF SOMALIA (271 pp.)

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This study investigates the current state of education in Somalia since the collapse of the central authority in 1991. Since all educational systems and infrastructure have been destroyed by the civil war, the study seeks to explore the educational institutions and systems that have emerged throughout the crisis. Similarly, the study looks into the various actors that have contributed and are contributing to the revival of education after the destruction of the old system. Investigating the education that has emerged during the conflict, the study seeks to examine the coping capacity of various local communities living through such conflicts with regard to education. It also explores the role that education can play as a tool of protection and educational institutions that are used as part of the coping mechanism.

The study employs qualitative methods of inquiry and is basically a case-study. Therefore, its findings are not intended to be generalized and replicated to other cases (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). However, this does not preclude important lessons to be learned from the case study as methodology and policy implications. Nevertheless, this study is limited to probing the current educational experiences in Somalia in the absence of the central state.
As a theoretical framework, this study utilizes the concept of social capital in the sense of informal social networks, trust and connections among community members (Clark, 2006; Coleman, 1988; Mundy & Murphy, 2001; Putnam, 1995). The study also draws on the capability approach which is “a set of basic human entitlements” for all people, outlining what people are “able to do and be” (Nussbaum, 2003, p. 3; Robeyns, 2005, p. 94; Sen, 2005; Unterhalter, 2003).

The findings of the study suggest that the Somali people have adapted rather well, under the circumstances, to the absence of the state, despite continuing insecurity and lawlessness prevailing in the country. The study documented that educational institutions that have emerged since the destruction of the old system are still in their nascent stage and need to be supported for them to yield the desired results.

Approved:

William S. Howard
Professor of School of Telecommunications
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The negative impact of wars and political and economic turmoil on civilian population is enormous. Very often people are killed or maimed, lose property and driven out their homes. One such consequence is that education and other essential social services are disrupted (Rasler & Thompson, 2002). Disruption of education is only one of many negative consequences of violent conflicts. Communities and individuals, especially children, are traumatized by wars and similar violence. However, it is institutional disruption and lawlessness that will have long-term effects on individuals and the society, as a whole.

The civil war that has been raging in Somalia since 1991 can best be described as an extreme case of political instability and general societal breakdown. The destruction of life and property that resulted from that is beyond description. Commenting on the severity of the conflict, Samatar (2002) characterized the current time of civil war from 1991 to the present as:

Years of misanthropy, blood-letting, greater destruction of whatever was left of the elements of the state, massive and concentrated starvation, break-up of the North and South, failed international intervention, continuing exodus from the country, and generalized existential bleakness, especially for the majority inside the country (p. 233). It is obvious that education in war zones requires a different treatment than we would give to education in normal circumstances. This is because the process of education does not occur in social isolation. The political, economic and socio-cultural conditions that surround the children are bound to impact their developmental growth and educational outcome. The question is how in these very difficult circumstances the parents and the
community at large manage the process and, most importantly, how do the children themselves learn and cope with the situation.

Educational intervention in emergency situations like armed conflicts, as well as natural calamities, is urgently needed today more than ever before, considering that according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO, more than 100 million children or one in every five children in the world is not enrolled in school (EFA monitoring report 2001). Machel (2001) noted that formal education is at risk during war, because it relies on consistent funding and administrative support that is difficult to sustain during political turmoil, such as the civil war in Somalia. The plight of children in the Somali crisis has not been adequately addressed so far, despite being one of the most conflicts on earth today. For example, for some reasons a United Nations report detailing human rights abuses against children in armed conflicts has barely mentioned Somalia as one of the countries where children are suffering due to the ongoing conflict (Children and armed conflict, 2003). I believe the reason for the anomaly is that the humanitarian aspects, especially issues of women and children, of the Somali conflict have not been adequately highlighted either by Somalis or outsiders. Unless the problem is studied its magnitude would not be realized and consequently it would be difficult to find solutions to it.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to explore the current educational situation in Somalia in this time of civil war. A major part of the study is to investigate the coping mechanism of various local communities in the country with regard to education. Since almost all educational systems and infrastructure have been completely destroyed by the
civil war, the study also seeks to explore the emerging systems and forms of education devised or employed by various actors in the education sector. Investigating some of the educational institutions that have emerged during the years of severe conflict, the study seeks to examine the coping capacity of the people living through such conflicts. It also explores the role education can play as a tool of protection and what educational institutions are used as part of the coping process. The role of local communities, as well as local and international aid agencies in rehabilitating the shattered educational infrastructures are also explored. For these reasons, the study takes place in some of the educational institutions that have been set up during this period of statelessness.

I would like to state from outset that for obvious logistic reasons this study had to be limited to southern regions of Somalia, especially the Mogadishu area and southwestern regions. Therefore, the findings of the study can be good examples of education in those regions, which might be similar, but do not claim to be generalized to those parts of the country where I did not conduct my research. Specifically, because there is a state, albeit fragile, the situation breakaway republic of Somaliland might be slightly different from the situation in the south. Thus, this study makes no claim to cover this part of the country or any other part that I was not able to visit to conduct my field research.

**Research Questions**

As a starting point, the study is guided by the following research questions.

1. How is Somali society coping with the absence of state-supported education and how is education being restructured under the present circumstances?
2. What factors or forces are contributing to the success or failure of education in the aftermath of the conflict in Somalia?

3. Is the current education in Somalia sustainable?

4. What kind of educational processes and systems, such as curriculum and language of instruction, are emerging under these conditions following the destruction of state education system?

**Statement of the Problem**

The crisis in education in Somalia is manifold, to say the least. The civil war which broke out in 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 only 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 their 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 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 is meant by “what is randomly learned from the general societal situations” (Abdi, 1998, p. 336).

It is even more alarming is 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 clue 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 school 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 mechanism, 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. Once the culture of peace and tolerance is inculcated in the youth, peace will hopefully take root in the community at large. It is clear, though, that 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 per cent 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 young generation (Raghe 1997). Nevertheless, the situation remains grave, warranting a thorough study.

**Significance of the Study**

This study investigates the coping mechanism of various local communities in the country with regard to education. Since almost all educational systems and infrastructure have been completely destroyed by the civil war, the study also seeks to explore the emerging systems and forms of education devised or employed by various actors in the education sector. As innocent as they are, children are frequent victims of armed conflicts around the world. According to Michel, (2001), more than two million children died during the decade of 1990s as a result of armed conflict. These children are either directly involved as combatants or deliberately killed by warring factions or simply caught up in the firing line of the war and killed there and then or forcefully displaced from their homes. Commenting on this tragic situation, Michel, (2001) says “Caught up in complex conflicts that have multiple causes and little prospect of early resolution, children are being sucked into seemingly endless endemic struggles for power and resources” (p. 1).
According to Sommers, (2002), most conflicts in the world today are civil in nature and involve increasing numbers of civilians, especially children. Children are directly involved in wars not only as child soldiers but in many other capacities, like all types of forced laborers, including sex slaves, porters, domestic servants and miners. Because of their tender age, developmental stage and physical weakness, children are particularly vulnerable in armed conflicts. They are normally the first casualty of any war. Many of them are caught in the firing line and along with other weak members of their families – mothers and the elderly – they are killed, maimed or forcefully displaced from their homes and countries, thereby disrupting their education. More tragically, many more children are forced to be part of the armed conflict by drafting them to armed militias or physically and sexually abusing them. Disruption of education due to war is likely to deny generations of people without access to schooling. Psychologically, the effects of war on children is likely to last long with hatred and memories and nightmares lingering in their mind for ages (Seymour, 1999).

In spite of the obvious disruption that war brings to the lives of children and adults, little research information is available on the capacity of the community to cope with such severe conditions and no research has been done on the Somali community’s coping mechanism during the civil war. Therefore, this study is hoped to contribute to the growing realizing of the role education can play in rehabilitating social life in war-torn societies. I also hope that the study will become part of the solution to the protracted conflict.
Limitations of the Study
This study employs qualitative methods of inquiry and is basically a case-study. Therefore, its findings are not intended to be generalized and replicated to other cases, because generally-speaking, qualitative research studies do not concerned themselves about the generalizability of the research outcome to similar situations (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). However, this does not mean to preclude important lessons to be learned from such case studies as to methodology and policy implications. This study is limited to probing the current educational experiences in Somalia in the absence of the central state. It cannot be generalized to other situations in the region or elsewhere. This is basically an experiment of the Somali case with all its idiosyncrasies and as Freire (1978) said “experiments cannot be transplanted; they must be reinvented” (p. 9). Therefore, although it can be useful to other contexts, the findings of the study should be read with this context in mind.

Delimitation
The unit of analysis of this study is roughly the Somali Republic that attained independence in July 1st, 1960 as a result of a union between the former Italian colony (UN Trusteeship territory) in the south and the former British Somaliland Protectorate in the north. This means that although the Somali speaking people in the Horn of Africa share a common cultural heritage in the form of the language, Islam and perceived shared identity, different territories underwent different historical experiences from the onset of colonialism up until now. Thus, the Somali speaking region of the Republic of Kenya (the former North Frontier District, NFD), the Somali speaking region in eastern Ethiopia (the Ogaden) and the Republic of Djibouti are not included in this study for obvious reasons. Also, increasingly in the last few years, the northwestern part of the Somali
Republic (the self-declared republic of Somaliland) has taken a somewhat different trajectory in development. Although it is not completely isolated from the present statelessness in Somalia, this region has fared much better than the rest of the country at least since 1993. Therefore, this region needs to be given a separate analysis in terms of state formations and institution building, including education. This study was conducted in that region but similar studies could easily be replicated there.

In particular, this study was conducted in the Mogadishu area and in few other regions in southern Somalia and, as such, its findings do not claim to represent the whole country. However, useful inferences can be drawn from it to understand the same set of social phenomena in other parts of the country with similar socio-economic conditions.

**Definitions**

In this study, unless otherwise stated, the following terms are defined as follows:

- **Civil war** refers to the armed conflict that has been raging in Somalia since 1991. Here, no distinction is made between different types of conflicts.

- **Coping** is a process that is made possible by human capacity to adapt to adverse circumstances.

- **Development** refers to the state in which things are improving and the result of developing. In particular, development means the improvement of material and social well-being of the people.

- **Education** is first, the experience and nurture of personal and social development towards worthwhile living, and second, the acquisition, development, transmission, conversation, discovery and renewal of worthwhile culture (Bassey, 1999). Therefore, it includes both formal and informal education.
Formal education refers to the modern school system brought to the country by the European colonial authorities and missionaries.

Informal education refers to what is randomly learned from the general societal situations (Abdi, 1998).

Islamic education in Somalia refers to the community-owned dugsi*Quranic* schools where children learn how to write and read the *Quran*, the Islamic religious subject in all schools, as well as the religious scholarship that is handled in mosques.

Private education is all educational services that are for public use but are conducted in schools that are established and managed privately and financed by school fees, whether or not as a consequence of weakness or absence of state authority.

Schools are those sites and institutions where the process of organized learning takes place. This includes both modern and traditional places of learning.

Somalia: unless otherwise references are made to other parts of Somali-inhabited areas, Somalia means the Republic of Somalia.

Statelessness refers to a situation where the central authority of the state has completely collapsed and there is only local or regional authority to govern the society or no authority at all.

**Background of the Study**

Somalia’s descent to anarchy began long before the state collapsed in 1991. The seeds of the crisis were sewn throughout the years of political independence, especially during the last ten years of the rule of the military dictator, Mohamed Siyad Barre.
Following the military defeat in a protracted border war with neighboring Ethiopia and subsequent military coup attempt by some junior military officers, many of whom were later executed by the regime, nepotism and institutionalized corruption became the order of the day (Abdi, 1998). Corruption and militarization of the regime, coupled with the Cold War rivalry between the U.S. and the former Soviet Union who poured military hardware into Somalia and neighboring countries, made education and other social services take a distant back seat in the government priority list. The situation kept on deteriorating until the civil war broke out and everything in the education sector collapsed (Abdi, 1998, Bennaars, Seif, & Mwangi, 1996).

The civil war that followed the collapse of the Barre regime destroyed literally every public property or infrastructure that was not privately owned and protected by its owner. Since Somalia was a socialist state with almost all learning centers, economic production tools and social services institutions being state owned, no such facility survived the destruction. Many educated people were targeted, simply because the warring militiamen did not understand or despised the value of education to the community. It is ironic that by early 1990 when the slogan “Education for All (EFA)” was being advocated throughout the world, the situation in Somalia had reached a point of education for none, because, for nearly two years in 1991-1992, no formal schooling took place with about 90% of school buildings either completely or partially destroyed (Abdi, 1998, Bennaars, Seif, & Mwangi, 1996).

As a consequence of the civil war, hundreds of thousands of Somali children have since missed out the opportunity to go to school. Therefore, the country is facing a bleak future if this tragic 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. Since the disintegration of the state in 1991, many UN agencies and international organizations and NGOs have undertaken some commendable projects to rehabilitate the education infrastructure as part of the overall relief and reconstruction efforts. However, these efforts are inadequate and fragmented with no coordination between the providers and the community, mainly due to the security situation. UN agencies and NGOs were acting independently, because they have different goals and different modalities for operating, resulting in haphazard ways of funding and implementing education programs. The only coordination efforts were made by UNESCO with logistical support by the United Nations development Office for Somalia (UNDOS) since 1993. To this end UNESCO PEER (Programme for Education for Development and Reconstruction) was establish and began operation in Mogadishu and subsequently expanded to the rest of the country and various refugee camps in Kenya, Djibouti, Ethiopia and Yemen. But even these efforts were less than successful due to lack of inter-agency cooperation and community support (Bennaars, Seif, & Mwangi, 1996, Abdi, 1998). In this connection it is worth noting that throughout the crisis, Islamic NGOs have proven to be more effective in delivering much needed services to all parts of the country. They are particularly engaged in education and health sector (Raghe, 1997). It is probably due to their religious nature that they gained community trust. They also could take security risks in areas where other NGOs consider too dangerous. That is why they stayed and kept operating after many international NGOs left for various reasons.
In this emergency situation, 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 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 don’t contribute to nor interfere in the running of education for refugees, international NGOs have implemented schools with cooperation with the local refugee community (Gezelius, 1996). In an example of cooperation between international aid agencies and local communities, Save the Children Federation/US implemented UNHCR-funded programs providing teacher training, 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).

**Historical Overview of Education in Somalia**

**Traditional Education**

Traditional education in pre-colonial Somali society was community-centered and locally administered. The system involved the training of young children by parents, extended family members and community as a whole in matters of manners, family and clan history, work skills relevant to their environment and rules and skills of war. This education system, according to Abdi (1998), was based on the communal value systems and was designed and implemented for the limited and temporally relevant matters of social administration and other matters of communal arrangements in accordance with the development needs of the society. A cultural feature which has characterized the Somali community and which still plays a role is the clan structure of the society. There is, however, a remarkable similarity in how various clans are structured and how they impart traditional education and upbringing of young children.

A traditional but more formal system of learning is the *Quranic* schools, known in most parts of the country as *dugsi*, which is a centuries’ old indigenous method of teaching the *Quran*. This community-supported system of learning has survived the test of time into the modern era and even during the civil war. Children of every village or nomadic camp learn in these *Quranic* schools by using homemade ink and wooden tablets. This method is unique in the sense that it uses Somali language in teaching the *Quran* in Arabic script without having to learn Arabic language. Despite remaining in its old fashion with no efforts made to modernize it up until today, this method of learning is still, according to (Abdi, A. 1998), positively impacting the lives of those many children
who go through it every year. Teachers of the *Quranic* schools travel with nomadic groups, and many children received only the education offered by such teachers. There are some stationary religious schools in urban areas as well. Because *Quranic* schools have proven to be very sustainable, some international aid agencies, particularly UNICEF tried to promote them as providers of formal education but this step is not being followed at the moment. This reflects a broad consensus that *Quranic* schools should not be interfered with but they could be given assistance (Retamal & Devadoss, 1998).

In certain sedentary communities in well established cities and villages, the indigenous system of education is better organized. Banafunzi (1996) gives a detail description of traditional education system in the coastal city of Brava. Here, traditional education, which is also mainly Islamic, was dispensed in a systematic phases or stages. All children aged between four to five years would go to the nearest *chiwo* or *Quranic* school where they are introduced to the schooling experience at an early age and learn Arabic alphabet and some verses of the *Quran*. When the teacher feels that it is appropriate, students can move to the next stage which usually involves thorough learning of the alphabet and completion of *Juzu Amma*, the thirtieth part of the *Quran*. Once this stage is completed, the next stage, which involves the recitation of the remaining 29 parts of the *Quran*, would normally follow, unless the child dropped out early. One interest feature of this system is that there are more female teachers who would also teach pupils handicraft skills. Female teachers are very rare in *Quranic* schools in most parts of the country. Also, unlike the case with the nomadic Somali communities in the rural area, very few children would actually memorize the whole *Quran*.
The Somali traditional education was, therefore, both socio-cultural and religious in character, taking place within the context of the extended family, as well as the Quranic schools. The system was relevant to the community’s basic needs and highly flexible and adaptive to the environment (Bennaars, Seif & Mwangi, 1996).

There was no Western education before the actual arrival of colonial administration. Unlike many other parts of Africa where Christian missionaries have established schools before the start of the colonization, there were no such missionaries in Somalia before the colonial era. Even after the colonial administration Christian missionary have always been viewed with suspension but they did establish some schools in different parts of the country (De Marco 1943). Some of the country’s independent leaders were trained in such schools some of which later become government schools after independence.

**Colonial Education**

Initially, European colonial governments left educational matters largely to Christian missionaries who set up schools in areas where they thought would be easier to convert the locals to Christianity. This is why they established very few schools in Muslim dominated areas, including Somalia, and where the indigenous communities have shown stiff resistance to missionary works. Only after the Second World War that colonial governments began to show interest in actively getting involved in African education after they had seen the fruits of African education in the form of trained – though partially – African workers, trained by the missions, providing cheap labor force (De Marco, 1943; Sinclair, 1980). Commenting on the situation in Kenya and explaining the lack of educational facilities for Somalis in Kenya, Turton (1974) pointed out that the
Somalis themselves have not shown particular interest in Western education, probably due to its perceived association with Christian missionaries. Until 1943, there was no single primary, intermediate or secondary school throughout the whole of Northern Frontier Province, the largest province in Kenya, where the bulk of the Somali pastoralists in the country lived.

Colonial education in Somalia was designed to serve the colonial administration by producing partly skilled and low paid Africans to help in some menial jobs and low rank administrative system, as well as cheap labor for the colonial economy. The first Italian schools to be opened in the south of the country in early 1900s were specifically intended to teach Somali children the Italian language. The students were not supposed to go beyond the seventh grade which was seen sufficient for Somali children for the purpose of colonial administration (Abdi, A. 1998). The underlying aim of Italian colonial education was partial assimilation of the natives, which is to make them near Italian. Assimilation was meant to bring about a change in the natives’ mental outlook and to impress them with the greatness of the Italian civilization. The Italian colonial administration did not understand the traditional clan structure of the Somali society and thus did not recognize the importance of accommodating local needs in the education curricula (De Marco, 1943).

In the beginning, Italian colonial administration had hard time imposing their rule on Somali society, which made some observers to conclude that Somalis are difficult to control. Tripodi (1999) attributes the difficulty the Italian colonial administration had in Somalia, compared to Eritrea, to the very different features of Somalis. For one, the Somali people had been isolated for centuries and they had very limited contact with
Europeans due to the unpredictable nature of the Somali coastline. In addition, as a nomadic people, Somalis did not have many permanent settlements and they were very independent and free society who would resist control. Moreover, Eritrea’s Coptic Church had certain similarity to Catholicism, whereas Somalis were Muslims.

Partly due to the difficulties that the Italian administrators were facing in controlling the Somali society and party due to other security concerns, colonial education was largely confined to the cities and towns and was not extended to rural areas where the vast majority of the population lived. Furthermore, the content of education system was theoretical and did not produce professionals with practical knowledge. According to some analysts, “colonial education appeared to be largely insignificant, if not irrelevant, to the vast majority of Somalis” (Bennaars, Seif, & Mwangi, 1996, p. 9). The medium of instruction was the colonial language, Italian in the south and English in the north (Ibrahim, 1983).

However, Tripodi, (1999) argues that during the UN trusteeship period from 1950 to 1960, the Italian administrators made some efforts to improve the situation, establishing an education program with “three main aims: to provide the majority of Somalis with at least primary education; to offer the small intelligentsia already existing in the country higher education; and to promote the formation of a new, well-educated elite” (p. 59). The problem was that there was a scarcity of primary schools and teachers. An Italian colonial administrator during the UN Trusteeship period estimated that there were only about 3,000 students educated in one of the 37 primary classes and in specialized courses (Tripodi, 1999). To tackle this problem and remedy the shortcomings, a sizeable number of Somali teachers were sent to Italy to attend teaching courses. The
colonial administration even set up in 1950 the school of Political and Administrative Preparation, offering a three-year course in administration, law, history of civilization, Islam, international law, UN organization, economy, geography, and the international statute for the organization of Somalia. Again in 1953, the Institute of Social Science, Law and Economics was established, which would eventually develop to become the University Institute of Mogadishu. It was mostly run by Italian lecturers (Lewis 2002, Tripodi 1999). The institute eventual become the foundation of the Somali National University which kept getting assistance from Italy even after independence, with the exception of the Faculty of Education in Lafoole which was supported by the US.

**Post-Colonial Education**

Soon after the World War Two, national struggle for political independence for Somalia became active in mid 1940s and for obvious reasons education was immediately on top of the agenda of the national independence movements. That was accompanied by the subsequently vital debate on language policy and the writing system for the Somali language (Abdi, A. 1998). Due to the arbitrary nature of the colonial boundaries in Africa, post-independence African countries faced enormous difficulties in indigenizing their education. Therefore, colonial languages retained their dominance status even after independence. Only a few countries have managed to put in place a national education policy on the use of local languages in education. The most commonly cited examples being, Tanzania, Somalia and Ethiopia (Bray, Clarke & Stephens, 1986).

The last ten years of the Italian colonial administration in the south (UN Trusteeship Administration) from 1950 to 1960 saw some progress in the education sector, because the Italian colonial government was required, under the UN trusteeship
agreement, to prepare the country for independent and, in the process, educate the Somali people by setting up modern schools for children and adult learners, as education was emphasized in the UN Trusteeship Agreement as “the most important instrument for promoting Somalia’s social, economic, political and moral progress” (Tripodi, P. 1999, p. 50). The Italian colonial administration had even set up a university institute in Mogadishu which later developed into the Somali National University, a full-fledged university divided into thirteen faculties, with 800 faculty and 7,500 students. The national government accelerated the process from the day the new Somali Republic was established in 1960 (Abdi, 1998, Urch, 1997).

In 1961, a year after independence, there were 18,000 Somalis enrolled in different schools in the 1961/62 school year. There was also a university institute with law and economics departments that had already been set up by the Italians (Laitin, 1976). According to Abdi (1998), the future of Somali education looked promising but there were many serious shortcomings. One such shortcoming was the lack of script for the Somali language. As in most post-colonial Africa, the languages of instruction in independent Somalia remained Italian and English, the colonial languages, which were complemented by the Arabic language which was basically confined to several schools run by the Egyptian government. Although the civilian government had indicated its willingness to constitute a script for the Somali language nothing was done until the military coup in 1969. The lack of education facilities in the country has led to more and more Somali students to pursue education abroad. Tripodi (1999) gives the following breakdown of the number of Somalia students who were studying abroad by late 1960s:
About 500 students were studying in the Soviet Union, 272 in Italy, 152 in Saudi Arabia, 86 in the U.S.A., 40 in Sudan, 34 in the UK, 32 in France and 29 in India (p. 116).

Somalia inherited a colonial education system that was not only incompatible but contradictory with itself as well. The southern part of the country had Italian education system, while northern part had English education system with each of these colonial languages being the medium of instruction in its respective region. It took the newly independent Somali nation three years to integrate the systems. The result ended up being three official languages, with Arabic being added to the two colonial languages (Ibrahim, 1983, Bennaars, Seif, & Mwangi, 1996). Although Somali is the mother tongue of the overwhelming majority of the population of Somalia, it was ironic that when the country gained independence in 1960, English, Italian, and Arabic were declared as official languages. Because of the nature of their training, most Somali elites at independence were literate in all or some of these languages but not in Somali and due to controversy involving technical, religious and political questions, no script for the Somali language could be agreed upon, either in the colonial era or in parliamentary years, 1960-1969 (Laitin 1977). As Warsame (2001) pointed out the consequence of this non-decision was enormous for Somali society and due to this indecision and lack of political will, the fate of the Somali language could not be decided until early 1970s.

The military rulers who came to power in 1969 made a final decision with regard to the writing system of the Somali language, adopting the Latin script. They also issued a decree to the effect that Somali was to be the language of political and administrative discourse in the Somalia. It also subsequently carried out a countrywide literacy campaign which was implemented in two phases, first in urban areas and second among
the nomadic people (Warsame, 2001). Somali was gradually made the medium of instruction in schools and official language for state administration. The introduction of written Somali language and subsequent literacy campaign resulted in sharp increase in literacy rate, as well as enrolment figures for primary schools and the number of primary schools (Abdi, 1998, Bennaars, Seif, & Mwangi, 1996).

The adoption of the Somali as the official language was seen as a giant step in the process of de-colonization, largely at the expense of the Italian, hitherto the colonial language with the widest area of influence within Somalia (Abdi, 1998, Bennaars, Seif, & Mwangi, 1996). The only exception to the general rule of Somalization of medium of instruction was higher education. Students who went through their high school using Somali were required to be taught in Italian once they are admitted to the Somali National University, because it was supported by the Italian government, except the College of Education in Lafoole, which was an English medium with American support. According to Tripodi, 1999), Italy played a significant role in providing Somalia with technical assistance in education, especially in higher education. Most of this assistance was provided during the 1970s when Italy was instrumental in establishing the Somali National University by upgrading the already existing Mogadishu University institute. The assistance was largely in the form of providing lecturers to the new university.

Although, Somalia is one of few linguistically homogenous African nations, comparatively, the language question has always remained a problem for the policymakers. In addition to the lack of development of the Somali language in the early days of the Somali Republic and the dual (Italian and English) colonial heritage, many Somali students went to different foreign countries for further studies, making the choice
of a particular langue even more complicated. Foreign influence had always been there in Somali language policymaking, with different interest groups advocating for certain languages. The UNESCO Education Planning Group in early 1960s recommended the adoption of English as the medium of instruction in Somalia from intermediate education. As Tripodi (1999) pointed out, Italian, as a former colonial language, had three main factors as advantages: the Italian government funded the establishment of various faculties of Somali National University, there was a good knowledge of Italian in southern Somalia as a result of colonial experience, and the Italian government had already provided assistance in developing education system in Somalia during the trusteeship. Both English and Arabic have always maintained a strong presence in Somali public life and are even becoming more popular in education, media and business since the collapse of the state in 1991. This state of affairs is obviously related to the emerging geo-political, economic and religious realities in the region and the rest of the world.

Although Somalia is overwhelmingly Muslim and the state has joined the League of Arab States during the rule of the military dictatorship, the Somali society was never completely culturally Arabized. However, Arabic has always been the preferred medium of religious scholars and some of the educated elites who went to Arab countries for their education. Many Somali students have always gone for further studies to Arab countries, traditionally Egypt and later also Saudi Arabia and Sudan, among other countries. The cultural contact with Egypt is longstanding, probably because of the ancient Al-Azhar University in Cairo. The Egyptian government has established Arabic medium schools throughout Somalia from the days of the UN Trusteeship with the agreement with the Italian colonial government. This dual education situation has often caused rift among
Somali intellectuals, some of whom – including the first head of state, Adan Abdullah Osman – preferred Italian over Arabic as the language of education, because they themselves were Italian trained (Bayne, 1963).

It appears that the quantity of education was given a boost during the post-independence period, especially after the introduction of the written form of the Somali language during the military regime. However, the quality of education has suffered tremendously during the same period, due to a combination of factors, including ill-informed educational policy and lack of adequate resources. It is also clear that whatever gains that were made since the writing of the Somali alphabet has been lost or destroyed since the disastrous Ogaden war with Ethiopia (Tripodi, 1999). The commendable achievements in this regard were made during the first ten years of the regime after which it began its downfall.

**Education in Post State Collapse**

Formal education in Somalia all but ceased in the early 1990s following the collapse of the state and the ensuing destructive civil war. The cessation of education activities also came with a total destruction of school infrastructure, physical or otherwise, and looting of whatever was left. School buildings were either ripped off the roofs or occupied by armed militias or displaced people. It was only during the period of the United Nations Operation in Somalia, UNOSOM, that aid agencies began to provide support to revive schools (Retamal & Devadoss, 1998).

This study primarily explores education that has emerged since after the collapse of the state in Somalia and seeks to document the schools and other educational institutions that have been established during this stateless period. It is helpful to state at
this early stage of the study that the educational institutions that have been set up since the collapse of the state should be seen as the exception, rather than the norm, considering the magnitude of the mess that the country finds itself in. This is because many people would think of education as a luxury that should not be indulged in during these severe conditions. Similarly, education should be seen as part of the rehabilitation process. As we shall see in the following chapters, 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 the study seeks to explore the close interplay between education and the community in the present-day stateless Somalia.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction
This chapter offers an analytical review of the literature on the topic with the aim of exploring past and present scholarship on the topic. In so doing, I hope to see where this study would fit in the scholarship on the issue under study. Perhaps due to the extraordinary situation in the country since the state collapse, there has been a considerable increase in scholarly research on Somalia, especially on the political and security situations. However, there is paucity in research on education in the period of the Somali history. This study, therefore, is hoped to bridge that gap in the literature on Somalia. In addition to education in Somalia which is the main theme of the study, this section also reviews literature pertinent to scholarship in Somalia, in general, and on education and state failure in similar contexts. Likewise, literature on education in emergency and the coping mechanism of individuals and groups are also examined.

Statelessness
State failure in which Somalia finds itself today is a phenomenon that is becoming increasingly common in the world since the end of the Cold War. Although most examples of state failure are to be found in Africa, with Somalia being an extreme case, there are other examples in almost all continents. Even in Europe, the cradle of the modern nation-state, we find failed or failing states, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and other constituent republics of the former Yugoslavia in the Balkan. In Asia, perhaps Afghanistan leads the list of failed or failing states. There are also several such examples in Latin America. The closest example to the Somali case in severity are examples from Africa, such as Liberia, Sierra Leon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi,
Rwanda and Southern Sudan, among others. Useful lessons can be learned from all these cases of state failure where the local community with the help of the international community tried to keep going and establish schools in varying shapes.

Herbst (2003) argues that unlike in European context, conflicts do not normally result in the political destruction of states in Africa. Somalia has defied this view in the sense that not only the northern part – former British protectorate – broke away and declared its independence but also there has been hardly any central state in the rest of the country for the past decade and a half. While holding the view that nation-state is the core unit of order in this era of globalization and the fulcrum of reasonable world stability, Hough (2003) admits that concerns and chaos loom large as a growing reality in this century. He states that “the principle danger for the nation-state is break-up from below, or infra-nationalism. Initially the danger is more evident in non-Western countries with shaky governments unable to withstand the disruption and turmoil” (p. 125).

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 deterioration into a complete anarchy.
While most people would like to see the state restored, it appears that there are individuals or groups who profit from the lawless situation. Some of these groups, who include *mooryaan* or members of armed militias and clan groups, are according to Menkhaus & Prendergast (1995) engaged in “an economy of plunder, mafia-like extortion rackets, and various other unlawful economic dealings… [and have] occupied valuable real estate in Mogadishu and the inter-riverrine areas”. They are also war profiteers who are interested not necessarily in winning the war but in the continuation of war-related activities in what Grosse-Kettler (2004) calls “war economy”. Therefore, they fear that they might lose their ill-gotten status if the rule of law is enforced. It is not a coincident then that some of these groups always try to sabotage any attempt to revive the state. However, it is clear that most Somalis yearn for a state that would bring back the national pride and put the security situation under control.

**Modern State and Education**

Ever since the modern state was invented formal education has been closely linked with it 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 (Waters & Leblanc 2005, Gradstein, Justman & Meier 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 (Williams & Cummings 2005, Meyer 2001, Bray & Lillis 1988).
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 disability, etc. Recognizing the role played by religious institutions and market forces in pioneering the early schools, Fuller & Rubinson (1992) argue 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 religious authorities were mostly in charge of schooling. State involvement sought to expand the limited scope of community-run education and put more emphasis on economic and social, rather than religious significance of education (Gradstein, Justman & Meier 2005). Obviously, it was in the industrial societies that this change is more pronounced than in less industrialized societies where the state is less effective in providing social services, such as health and education.
Community and Education

The dominant role of modern state in providing educational services in most nations tends to overshadow the traditional and historical community involvement in education. 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, like in many colonial systems, were largely based on community inputs (Bray, 2003).

For a variety of humanitarian and ideological reasons, the role of the state in education has 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 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 Transition

Articulating the role of education in all societies, Carnoy & Samoff (1990) point out that schooling is generally seen as the primary vehicle for developing and training skills to ensure that the young who are the next generation are adequately prepared for the specific tasks that the society expects of them. The role of schools is even greater in societies undergoing profound social transformations. The role of education is not only to maintain relatively unchanging social structures in capitalist societies but also has a role in those social changes that do occur. The critical theory analysis that schools are the
grounds of social reproduction is important but in societies in transition, education is less static. Rather, it moves with the society in its social transformation.

The usefulness of this critical theory analysis for this study is limited because it has largely been applied in societies in transition from capitalist economy to a system where the state has a dominant role in all spheres of public life. This study is concerned with the role of the society in establishing, maintaining and developing schools in the absence of the state.

There is no better long-term solution to armed conflicts than providing quality education to the community involved, especially young children whose lives are extended beyond the war and, therefore, would carry either peace or hatred to the next generation. For these children education will hopefully be a save haven now and a real investment in the future. In this regard, Sommers (2002, p. 8) said “For them, school can become an essential form of psychological intervention, a critically important step on the road to recovery and a bulwark against what can be severe and profound destructive (including self-destructive) behavior” (p. 8). Observers generally agree on the important role played by education in times of conflict or in its aftermath. It has been observed in many conflict-ridden areas that school systems are almost always easy targets of violence in conflict, they rarely completely cease to function and they rapidly resume operation with or without outside support as violence subsides. There is a growing recognition that education has an essential role both in promoting or preventing conflict, and as a fundamental element of wider social and economic reconstruction (Reshaping the future, 2005).
Unfortunately, education in emergencies has not traditionally occupied a prominent place in humanitarian thinking. The simplistic reasoning is that no one dies from not going to school, and other life-threatening needs – for food, water, shelter or healthcare – can at first glance seem more pressing (Nicolai, 2003). Amid conflict and crisis, education programming has been viewed as a luxury, and a task best left to the development community. Sinclair, (2002, p. 123) points out that education can be a divisive factor in society, sometimes leading to violent conflicts or can be a factor which contributes to social cohesion and peace-building. Increasingly, however, education is recognized as one of four pillars of humanitarian aid, along with food and water, shelter and health care (Machel, 2001).

Education in emergency situations is a good example of how a bottom-up approach of intervention can be implemented among 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).

Many scholars (Sommers, 2002, Michel, 2001, Sinclair, 2002) have recognized the role that education can play in mitigating the effects of war on children, protecting them, as well as preventing possible spread of armed conflicts. For example, schools can create a structured environment for children to organize their lives and rehabilitate those
of them who got involved in the conflict in any capacity. 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. Education in emergency can take three distinct shapes: preparedness education during pre-conflict period, education during war and education during the early post-war reconstruction phase (Sommers, 2002).

International and local aid agencies have a pivotal role to play in emergency situations, especially where the central state authority is either weak or nonexistent, as the case of Somalia. Many such agencies have indeed stepped in and provided support for the community when it was needed. Islamic NGOs and various UN agencies were the front runners in this regard but Western donor agencies also came and offered a helping hand. For example, the United States Agency for International Development sponsored a sub-sector assessment of education in Somalia in 2003 with the aim of reviewing the system, identifying strengths and weaknesses and recommending intervention options (Williams & Cummings, 2005).

Education affects and is affected by the conflict that rages in the society and if well-managed might help prevent future conflicts. Analyzing the conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Coulby & Jones (2001) point out that education in the former Yugoslavia failed “to deal with the issues of nationalism and xenophobia” (p. 116).

In view of Somalia’s ‘lost generation’, children and young adults who have known little or no formal education since the outbreak of the civil war in 1991, Farah, Biixi & Cabdulle (2001) stress the urgent need for broad provision of educational services and make the following recommendations:
• Establishing a curriculum development center, funded by a combination of government and donor funds,

• Including gender education in the curriculum,

• Seminars and awareness-raising activities, organized by (community education committees) CECs, on the importance of sending children (girls as well as boys) to school and of paying the fee for their education,

• Teacher selection on the basis of qualifications and competitive test scores, not clan affiliation,

• Either the government or a Teachers’ Association ensuring that head teachers, school supervisors, and teachers are qualified or received the required training;

• CECs entering into contract employment agreement with teachers;

• Regular job performance evaluation;

• In-service training to take place at regional and district level, with teachers and head teachers being trained and educated on gender issues relevant to education and the school environment, and on how to handle the specific needs of girls at school;

• Somali and Arabic languages to be the languages of instruction, with English being taught according to need or as elective;

• Parents paying school fees, with students or their parents buying textbooks;

• A policy on improving girl’s enrolment and retention rate at schools (p. 224).

**Higher Education**

Like all educational facilities in the country, Somali National University and other institutions that offered post-secondary education have been completely destroyed in the
civil war. In the aftermath of the devastating civil war that Somalia has gone through for almost two decades now, some Somali intellectuals and local and international NGOs have made commendable efforts to rehabilitate the shattered educational infrastructure in the country. Nur-Awaleh (2003) gives an interesting account of some of the bold steps taken to rehabilitate Somalia’s higher education. In most cases this amounts to building new institutions from afresh with no prior foundation. Some of these examples are:

**Mogadishu University**
The idea of establishing the university was conceived in June 1993 by a group of former professors of the Somali National University and other prominent Somalia intellectuals. It was formally established as a full-fledged and recognized private university in August 9, 1996 and opened its doors to students in September 22, 1997.

**Amoud University**
This is the first university to be established in the self-declared Republic of Somaliland in northwestern Somalia. Intellectuals from the Boroma area who were living abroad hatched the plan for the university in the early 1990s and Amoud University officially opened in October 1997 (Useem, 1999).

**University of Hargeisa**
This university in Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland, was officially opened in October 23, 2000 by the then president of Somaliland republic, Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal. The university began its first classes the following month with 52 students (Nur-Awaleh, 2003, p. 542)

Enumerating some of the problems facing these nascent institutions, the author points out these universities have serious difficulties in recruiting and retaining Somali
faculty members by offering them attractive reward systems understandably due to the continuous economic hardship faced by the nation as a whole. Therefore, unless and until the economic and political trend is reversed, the hardships facing the Somali higher education are likely to remain in place.

Some of the specific problems facing higher education in the country are:

1. The multiplicity of languages being used simultaneously in different levels of education has resulted in confusion and breakdown of coordination among different levels.

2. Somali language instructional materials were hastily created during the period of rapid educational expansion in the 1970s and lacked systemic design.

3. The problem of equity for women, as well as for rural students needs to be tackled adequately.

4. Education administration in Somali higher education has been marked by the lack of coordination between various institutions.

5. Somali higher education suffers from a lack of data collection relevant to the educational needs of the country.

6. There is a lack of adequately trained personnel.

7. Brain drain has been devastating to the higher education and research in the country (p. 543).

**Coping With Adverse Conditions**

Coping with difficult environment is a psychological process that is made possible by human capacity to adapt to adverse circumstances, deal with challenges of life or overcome adversity (Kleinke, 1998). Researchers, (Dimsdale, 1978, Asmussen, &
Cresswell, 1995) documented how in the wake of violent experiences human beings, both individually and in groups, react with fear and apprehension and eventually adapt to the circumstance. This reaction is just some of the long-term traumatic effect of violence on children, learners, educators and the general public. Coping is a two-way process where the individual or group of individuals adjusts to adapt to the stressful experience they have undergone. Human beings react to stressful events with one of two responses: one is external efforts focused on problem-solving techniques and the other is internal efforts focused on emotions and similar attitudes aimed at shielding the victim from harmful effects of the stressor psychologically (Oweini, 1998).

One of the most common psychological effects of war is the stress disorder known as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) which is a stress reactions associated with catastrophic trauma, like war trauma. PTSD has been defined as “a constellation of symptoms resulting from a recognized stressor that would evoke significant symptoms of distress in almost everyone” (Hayman, et al. 1987, p. 363). It is only natural that human beings react to pleasant and unpleasant life events and surrounding environment in certain way. Stress can come to people from a variety of sources and a person is said to be under stress “when the demands that an environment on people do not mesh with their capacity to cope with those demands” (McAndrew, 1993, p. 77). At the theoretical level, Ladd, (2003) explains that coping is based on the view that human adaptation is a complex, developmental process, one that is triggered by multiple factors that are both internal and external to the child, and instrumental in shaping the child’s development over the life course.
Lazarus, (1991) identifies two ways in which the process of coping affects a person’s emotional relationship with the environment encountered: one way is a coping process that changes the actual relationship like when you defend yourself from an enemy. The other coping process changes only the way in which the relationship is attended to, for instance if the victim of the stress consciously avoids perceiving or thinking about the source of the stress. This is the adaptation process of denial that could alleviate the effect of the stress on the victim (Laufer, 1988). In order to survive the ordeal of war and effectively cope with its traumas, human beings normally use a variety of political, economic and socio-cultural mechanism to guide through these agreeably difficult times.

Exploring the effect of coping on positive attitudes of war victims, Ai, et al. (2003) identifies religion among these coping mechanism that help otherwise traumatized victims of war cope with the related stresses. This coping mechanism is termed as religious-spiritual coping and focuses on the cognitive resources and additional spiritual resources for coping. The argument here is that individuals with religious or spiritual resources are likely to show positive attitude and resilience. Optimism and hope are key factors in religious coping.

Commenting on children’s ability to cope with difficult conditions, Cole, & Brown, (2002, p. 131) say that “children in their study showed strong coping skills and resiliency despite adversity.” The study highlighted students' closeness to their families, the importance they attribute to their parents' values of education, and the normal developmental need to socialize with other children. The role of school both as a teaching and learning agent, but also as a socialization agent, was also demonstrated. The study
concluded that the student responses reflect a broad range of strengths, issues and concerns. Some have to do with recovery from a period of stress and dislocation; others are similar to the hopes and anxieties of most children of that age group, while others may be more characteristic of the culture in which the students live. Likewise, Navia, & Ossa, (2003) emphasized the importance of family connection for coping with the aftereffects of violent traumatic experience like kidnapping, not only for the victims but also for family members. In this regard, Machel, (2001: 81-82) says:

A child’s ability to cope with and positively adapt to adverse circumstances depends on a variety of factors: age, stage of development, sex, personality, cultural background, experience, resilience, the availability of social support and the nature and frequency of violence in the child’s life. The way children cope with the effect of conflict may also be influenced by the prevailing cultural belief system.

Oweini, (1998) examined coping with war-related stress among Lebanese students following the long civil in their country. The study concluded that the students perceived their experience as students in war-torn Lebanon comparable to any experience in more stable environments. Again, a wide range of internal and external factors, including “socioeconomic status, …adaptive defense mechanism and personality traits, role of religion and …strong support network of family were found to play a critical role in helping the students cope more effectively with effects of the war.” (p. 421) Thus, despite the admittedly numerous negative impact of war on children, scholars have noted the remarkable capacity of children and adults to cope with these negative effects and, given the opportunity, they could come out stronger and potentially excel in school, in particular. Every individual or groups of individuals have their own ways of coping with

Coping is a human strength without which individuals and societies would have collapsed in the face of tragic incidents and other life challenges. Appropriate to this study is the human ability to pragmatically adapt to the harsh reality in which people find themselves. This is what the renowned Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, realized when he said: “We are surrounded by a pragmatic discourse that would have us adapt to the facts of reality.” (Freire, 2004, p. 1)

Long before the current crisis set in, Laitin (1977) suggested that “the continued stability of Somali social structure during centuries of colonial contact may be attributed in part to its resiliency” (p. 43). In a recent study on education of Somalis in the diaspora, Kapteijins & Arman (2004) pointed to the strong sense of community among Somalis and cultural pride that help them overcome adverse conditions. Elaborating more on this cultural confidence, the study stated the following:

They feel strongly about their cultural values and habits as well as their religion, Islam, which appears to strengthen their resilience. Recent Somali immigrants often go out of their way to live together in the same towns, neighborhoods, and buildings, and almost immediately establish dugsi, or informal Quranic school, for their children. Their solidarity and mutual support in times of emergency, such as labor dispute, illness or death, are extraordinary (p. 27).

Quoting a research review complied by Albert Bandura (1989), Kleinke (1998) points to the following as the most important benefits of coping with adverse conditions:

1. Coping sets high goals and teaches people problem-solving skills.
2. Coping helps people to stay focused on the challenge that is being faced.

3. Coping gives people strength in visualizing their possibilities for success.

4. Coping gives people confidence in themselves and courage to persevere and not to settle for mediocre outcomes.

5. Coping makes people future-oriented and teaches them how to make long-term plans by delaying immediate gratifications.

6. Coping teaches people how to reward themselves for success.

7. Coping makes people strong and teaches them to be less troubled by physical and emotional stress.

**Social Capital**

The phenomenon of community members assuming the responsibility of organizing schools in the absence of the state can be explained by applying 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 witness a boom all over the world in the form of non-governmental organizations, NGOs, goes along way in helping understand the issue (Mundy & Murphy 2001). Social capital refers to social networks that bind community members together and which individuals and groups can rely on in times of crisis. Attempting to define the concept of social capital, Putnam (2000) says:

> 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).

The notion of social capital is crucially important in trying to address social upheavals and make sense of how the society adapts to the effects of socio-economic disadvantages. Elucidating this point, Clark (2006) states:

The notion of social capital is a useful framework for reclaiming public life. It refers to connections among individuals, and is the glue that binds society together: the trust, mutual understanding, shared values and behavior that link members of communities and make co-operative action possible. The basic premise is that interaction enables people to build communities and commit themselves to each other.

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 atrocious 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.

This study also draws on the capability approach, as espoused by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum, which is “a set of basic human entitlements” for all people. The core characteristic of the capability approach is its focus on what people are “able to do and be” (Nussbaum, p. 3, 2003; Robeyns, 2005, p. 94; Sen, 2005; Unterhalter, 2003). Theorizing social justice for individual welfare and collective solidarities, several studies see the notion of capabilities approach as the most comprehensive framework within which human well-being can be conceptualized, especially among groups and
communities. The same is also true in explaining negative effects of social relations (Saito, 2003; Stewart, 2005; Walker, 2003).

Exploring the extent to which indigenous social institutions remained in tact in post-colonial Somalia, Hashim (1997) concludes 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 which allows major clan families self-rule. The International community should play a supportive, rather than a dominant role in the process of rehabilitating Somalia (p. 129). Similarly, Adam et al. (1998) says that “Islam can build cultural cohesiveness and solidarity” (p. 21).

**Summary of the Literature Review**

This chapter has reviewed the literature on statelessness and state failure, not only in Somalia but elsewhere in the world (Herbst 2003, Hough 2003). Admittedly the security situation is grave in most parts of the country and armed militias often engage in robbery and extortion (Menkhaus & Prendergast 1995, Grosse-Kettler 2004). However, the view that statelessness in Somalia does not necessarily amount to anarchy was considered (Menkhaus 1998). The review also considered the close relation between the modern state and formal education but noticed growing community involvement in education (Waters & Leblanc 2005, Gradstein, Justman & Meier 2005, Williams & Cummings 2005, Meyer 2001, Bray & Lillis 1988, Fuller & Rubinson 1992, Bray 2003).

The chapter also reviewed the literature on coping mechanisms for individuals and groups to adapt to difficult conditions (Dimsdale, 1978, Asmussen, & Cresswell, 1995, Oweini 1998, Ladd 2003, Lazarus 1991). Similarly, the chapter reviewed the literature on education in emergency situations and the effect education could have on

Finally, the chapter reviewed the literature on the theory of social capital which is used to explain social networks that the community utilizes as a coping mechanism under these harsh conditions and recent studies on civil society organizations (Coleman 1988, Putnam 1995, Mundy & Murphy 2001, Putnam 2000, Hashim 1997, Adam et al. 1998).

This review of the existing literature shows that there has been an increased attention to the issue of state failure and its impact on security. Similarly, there are quite a number of studies on the relations between education and modern state and the role of local communities in education, either as a supplementary, parallel or substitute to the state. Education in emergency situation has also received some attention from scholars and practitioners but to a lesser degree. Many researches have been conducted on the coping capacities of individuals to adverse conditions, be they physical, mental or environmental trauma. The notion of social capital has also been receiving increased attention from academicians as well as development workers. However, this review shows that little or no research has been done on the coping capacity of groups and communities living in extremely difficult situations and the coping mechanism they employ to do so. Therefore, this study seeks to fill that gap in the literature and explore if and how communities cope with extremely harsh environment such as the statelessness in which Somalia finds itself in today. In doing so, the study utilizes the concept of social capital as a theoretical framework underpinning the community support networks that enable them to adapt to the difficulties.
There has been a steady increase in the literature on the current political situation and state collapse in Somalia in the last decade of the twentieth century. Similarly, the economic decline and related social problems have been researched on by an increasing number of scholars (Little, 2003 & Mubarak, 1996). However, with the exception of some articles in few journals and chapters in books, no such interest has been shown in the question of education during this civil war period. Therefore, this study is hoped to address this paucity of scholarship in education in stateless society, in general and in present-day Somalia, in particular, thus filling the gap in the literature. It is my hope also that the study will contribute to the understanding of the crisis in general and ultimately in finding a lasting solution to it.
CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative Research Paradigm

This section covers the research methodology of the study. It explains the research paradigm that is most suitable for conducting this study. The section also explains the research instruments that are used for generating the data. It also discusses how the data generated are analyzed. By definition, research is implicitly or explicitly theoretical, organized around a set of ideas. For a researcher to investigate a phenomenon there is a need to identify the theoretical underpinning of the research methodology. This is necessary because of the different approaches to understanding human and social behavior (Allen & Walker Eds. 2000, Bogdan & Biklen 1992).

However, instead of relying on existing theories or testing hypothesis, this study uses the grounded theory which generates theory from the data itself without pre-conceived theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It utilizes the interpretive paradigm and ethnographic research methods that are associated with it in designing the study. The main concern here is to better understand the phenomenon under study, the subjective worldview the research participants and at the same time safeguard their integrity (Cohen & Manion, 1994). Adopting this approach, I understand that instead of looking for a reality that exists out there independent of the researcher and participants, the qualitative researcher recognizes the socially constructed nature of reality (Kleiber, 2004). Therefore, in order to get a better understanding of the social world of the participants, the researcher should be familiar with their natural setting contrary to the viewpoint of the normative paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998).
For the purpose of this study qualitative research techniques are best suited to observe and interact with participants in their natural settings in order to make sense of their subjective reality. This means that qualitative research is concerned with meaning, i.e. the ways in which different people make sense of their lives and the social reality around them and also with process rather than simply with outcome and product (Bogdan & Biklen 1992). Qualitative research methods provide a useful vehicle in achieving and interpreting the ways in which the research setting is composed and the participants interact among themselves and with the outside world, including the researcher.

According to Bogdan & Biklen (1992), the term qualitative research is an umbrella term referring to several research strategies that share certain characteristics. For example, the data collected is rich in description that is not easily handled by statistical procedures. The aim here is “to investigate topics in all their complexity, in context” (p. 2).

Furthermore, qualitative researchers “do not approach the research with specific questions to answer or hypothesis to test. They also are concerned with understanding behavior from the subject’s own frame of reference” (p. 2). Likewise, the direct source of data for qualitative research is the natural setting of the study participants and the researcher is the key instrument in the whole process of research (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

As a theoretical framework, this study utilizes the concept of social capital in the sense of informal social networks, trust and connections among community members (Clark, 2006; Coleman, 1988; Mundy & Murphy, 2001; Putnam, 1995). The study also draws on the capability approach which is “a set of basic human entitlements” for all people, outlining what people are “able to do and be” (Nussbaum, p. 3, 2003; Robeyns,
The notion of capabilities approach is the most comprehensive framework within which human well-being, social justice for individual welfare and collective solidarities can be conceptualized. The same is also true in explaining negative effects of social relations (Saito, 2003; Stewart, 2005; Walker, 2003).

**Role of Researcher**

As many qualitative researchers recognize the researcher is the key instrument in designing the research methods, collecting and analyzing data (Bogdan, & Biklen, 1992). Because the credibility of any qualitative inquiry largely depends on the researcher, the researcher must display a high degree of tolerance for complex social world, be sensitive to the context, be a good communicator (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). All research is subject to bias and investigators try to figure out ways to minimize biases. As mentioned above, qualitative researchers are key instruments in the study. Therefore, the question of complete objectivity in such researches is difficult to envision. However, they should not allow their biases to shape the direction and outcome of the study. For example, the researcher should not collect only those data that he/she likes. Instead, they spend a considerable amount of time in the setting to generate sufficient amount of data in the process (Bogdan, & Biklen, 1992, p. 46). One has to strike a balance between the risk of isolation and alienation from the participants and allowing personal biases of association with the research setting to detrimentally influence the research outcome. Emphasizing this point, Allen & Walker Eds. (2000) says: “Rather than separating self from subject, qualitative researchers nurture a self-conscious awareness of the inseparability of theory, data, self, and intervention in daily life” (p. 21).
Qualitative research methods are generally the best approach to doing research in the developing world context. However, such approach might be fraught with difficulties, especially if the setting is conflict-ridden where different segment of the society are competing for power, wealth, or prestige or all. Abdi (2001) voices concern about the danger of conducting qualitative research and relying on the narratives of members of societies in conflict such as Somalia. The caution is necessitated because due to the harsh environment and issues of life and death that are at stake each segment of these societies may have some urgent but unannounced aims in mind and might deliberately provide a non-factual information that favors its interest. Three possible factors may strengthen the relative rigor of the methodology and the research findings:

1. Having a deep and expansive knowledge of the human geography, as well as the general social history of the country would be indispensable.

2. Being fluent, both oral and written, in the local languages would facilitate understanding and sensitivity of people’s culture, religion and the general life outlook and deeper and mutually trustful relationship between the researcher and the community.

3. A comprehensive understanding of current power relationship among the groups competing for power, whether political, economic or social, would be indispensable. This would generally give the researcher the necessary tools to identify a number of misfits in the data that could be directly extrapolated to the actual events on the ground.

Coming from the same cultural background and speaking the same language as the participants gives me an advantage to interact with them without cultural or language
barriers. I went into this setting fully aware of the many pitfalls of doing research in difficult situations. Therefore, I took reasonable precautions not to be dragged into unnecessary and unproductive Somali squables that are so common these days.

Considering the difficult security, political, economic conditions and the peculiar social dynamics of doing research in the present-day Somalia, it is absolutely crucial that my own role and connection with the setting be clearly defined. Being a Somali, myself, and speaking the language of my research participants was obviously an added advantage for me in the present circumstances. Specifically, though, I established a workable and practical connection to the setting. During my last visit to the country, after the collapse of the state, I had a chance not only to see, first hand, the destruction caused by the civil war but also to get a sense of how the people are leading their life in the absence of the state. I could compare this with the situation the country was in during my earlier visit just before the outbreak of the civil strife. With regard to the society in general, I was fortunate that I had friends and relatives on whom I could rely on if the security situation necessitated. Particularly, in the education sector in which my research interest lies and in order to facilitate my entrée into the research setting, I had the following two strategies that I was relying on as a starting point at the beginning of my fieldwork:

- First, my best friend and former university classmate, Farah Abdulqadir, who heads one of the leading NGOs providing education to large parts of the country was tremendously helpful to me throughout my visit. Through that NGO, I was able to access their and other schools and was introduced to teachers, students, parents and school administrators, as well other NGOs.
Second, I had a working liaison with Mogadishu University Foundation here in Ohio to facilitate my visit there and introduce me to leading figures in the educational establishments.

While I was in Mogadishu, officials of Somali Institute of Management and Administration Development, SIMAD, and Mogadishu University were tremendously helpful to me in walking me through the minefields. I am grateful to all of them, especially Abdirahman Odowaa of SIMAD and Mohamed Gacal of Mogadishu University.

The Research Setting

This study 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 up until the time the study is being conducted. These include primary and secondary schools and those privately-run institutions of higher learning that operate in different parts of the country. Since it is the main concentration of the Somali population with their social institutions, I began my research with those educational settings in and around the Mogadishu area. I then proceeded to some other selected parts of the country to give the study a national outlook.

The choice of setting was made for the following reasons: this area has become the epicenter of the Somali population for past several decades and because of that the center for most commercial activities and societal experiments with modern social institutions, including schools and hospitals.
Research Participants

In order to explore how the Somali community has coped or is coping with the unusually difficult situation of statelessness and civil war, I carried out a descriptive case study of the educational institutions in the country that I visited. This I did by using a combination of in-depth interviews, participant observation and focus group discussions. These methods allowed me to understand how educational institutions are being established. This helped answer one of the research questions guiding the study, which was what educational systems are emerging from the present experience.

The participants in the study were 27 individuals selected from among those Somalis 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 how closely involved the individual was in the educational process or was concerned about it. Educators’ past experiences were also taken into account. The selection of participants also involved what is known as snowball technique which allows for making additional contacts based on recommendations from participants (Glesne and Peshkin, 1992).

About the Participants

I would like to give a brief but useful introduction about my interviewees that I hope will offer some insights into the sources of my data. As I pointed out earlier, in addition to the interviews, my data also came from a focus group discussion in which another of 14 people took part and my own observations of the school settings that I visited during the fieldwork. Therefore, I draw heavily on the following individuals as a primary source but they are not the only source of my data. In the following section, I would like to give a brief description of some of the individuals who took part in this
study and allowed me to use their names in the study and I hope that would be useful to future researchers, as well as aid agencies, that may go to these settings and interact with these people. In this brief introduction, I would only give current positions and not background information of the individuals.

**Abdikarim Hussein**

Abdikarim is the deputy director of Africa Muslims Agency (AMA), a Kuwait-based international NGO that has been involved in relief and rehabilitation efforts in Somalia since early 1990s. Presently, the NGO runs many, primary and secondary schools in Mogadishu, Beledweyn and Kismayu, as well a college-level institute for business and management in Mogadishu. This NGO and its staff were tremendously helpful to me during my travel to and stay in Somalia, especially in Mogadishu, and I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to them.

**Abdirahman Sheikh**

Abdirahman is the principle of Hamar Boarding School, a large school in Mogadishu, encompassing all grade levels from kindergarten to secondary. The school was originally meant to serve as a boarding institution for children whose families are not in Mogadishu but it turned out that a large number of its students are day scholars who don’t use the boarding facilities. The school was established and is locally managed by school teachers led by the principal, Abdirahman.

**Abdulmajid Hassan Nuh**

Abdulmajid is the principal of Ahmed Gurey Secondary School, which is one of the largest schools in Mogadishu. This school is one of the schools that were established and supported by African Muslims Agency. Since it is only a secondary school, it admits
students who finished primary education in other schools. This school is one of the largest in the country.

**Abubakar Sheikh Said**

Abubakar is the current secretary of the Formal Private Educational Network in Somalia (FPENS), one of the two large educational umbrella organizations. The networks have been established to coordinate schools in the country. FPENS acts effectively as the educational regulatory authority for those schools that are members in it. It coordinates examinations and issues certificates to students who pass those examinations.

**Abukar Muudey**

Abukar is the principal of Al-Fajr School, a large and well-managed school in northern Mogadishu. The school comprises both primary and secondary levels from grade One to grade 12. The school is housed in a huge three storey building which houses all the classrooms and a small science laboratory. There is also a separate administrative block in the same compound. It is worth noting that this school is in the northern part of Mogadishu which was seen earlier in the civil war as unsafe and the school was set up during those days.

**Ahmed Abdullahi**

Ahmed is the head of Imam Shafii Foundation, a local NGO that runs its own schools in Mogadishu. The foundation was one of the first local NGOs to establish schools in Mogadishu following the collapse of the state-sponsored schools in early 1990s. Ahmed and other senior officials of the foundation are trained former teachers who remained in the country throughout the civil war. Their schools were the first to be established after the state collapse.
Farah Abdulqadir

Farah is the director of Africa Muslims Agency (AMA), a Kuwait-based international NGO that has been involved in relief and rehabilitation efforts in Somalia since early 1990s. Farah was one of the first Somali educators to come back and take part in the relief and rehabilitation efforts at the height of the civil war and famine in 1992. One the relief efforts were over, they started setting up schools. Although based in Kuwait, its staff members in the country are entirely Somalis. Today AMA is one of the largest NGOs sponsoring schools in the country. In addition to its many schools in Mogadishu, Beledweyn and Kismayu, the NGO has set up a college-level institute for business and management in Mogadishu.

Dr. Mohamed Hussein

Dr. Hussein is the dean of the Faculty of Shariah of Mogadishu University in Mogadishu. Mogadishu University is the largest of several private institutions of higher education that have been established during the last decade to cover the need of Somali students who graduated from secondary schools and cannot go abroad to pursue higher education. Like many of his colleagues, Dr. Hussein has come back to contribute to the establishment of the fledgling education in the country.

Hassan Sheikh

Hassan is the dean of Somali Institute of Management and Administration Development (SIMAD) in Mogadishu. SIMAD is a largely self running college level institute that offers diplomas and degrees in management sciences. It was established in 1999 with the help of Africa Muslims Agency (AMA) and other international and local support. The
institute has a large student enrolment in its accounting, business administration and information technology departments.

Mohamed Elmi Tohow

Mr. Tohow is the principal of Mahmud Harbi Primary School in Mogadishu. This is a large school established and supported by Africa Muslims Agency. Tohow is one of most senior Somali educators still involved in education in the country. He was instrumental in setting up the first schools in Mogadishu at the height of the civil war in early 1990s.

Mohamed Gacal

Gacal is the coordinator of the Graduate Program of Mogadishu University in Mogadishu. This program is perhaps the only one of its kind in Mogadishu at the moment. Mr. Gacal is actively involved in forging academic ties with other institutions as well as developing instructional capacity of the program and preparing an atmosphere conducive to learning and research for the students. Mr. Gacal was my main contact person with Mogadishu University with which I had established a useful contact well before my visit to the country. He was extremely helpful to me in this regard.

Mukhtar Geedi Ibrahim

Mukhtar is a deputy principal and teacher at Al-Masal School in Mogadishu. This is a large private school that was established by its teachers without NGO support and is run entirely with the schools fees that students and parents pay. It uses Somali and English as medium of instruction.

Mustafa Maalim Ibrahim

Mustafa is the deputy principal of Al-Qalam Primary School in Baidoa. He also teaches at the schools. This is one few schools that are properly functioning in this major regional capital. It is also one of few schools that I visited outside Mogadishu. The region where
this school is located has seen one of the most traumatic episodes of the civil war and famine in the country throughout 1990s.

**Sharif Ali**

Sharif is an experienced senior teacher who is now working with the educational section of the Red Crescent Society of the United Arab Emirates in Mogadishu. The Red Crescent Society supports schools in Mogadishu and Baidoa, as well as healthcare centers. Before the state collapse, Sharif had worked as a teacher and principal in many parts of the country.

**Sheikh Omar**

Sheikh Omar is the principal of Buulow Primary School in Hudur, Bakool Region. This is one of few schools operating in this town whose residents struggle to pay enough money as school fees due to the harsh economic conditions. Sheikh is one of only four teachers running the school with the meager resources of school fees they collect from the parents.

Even when I left the research setting, I maintained contact with some of the research participants. I telephoned them and emailed them to ask for clarifications or explanation of points of their stories that could not make sense of on my own. This proved to be very helpful in the data analysis.

**Ethical Considerations**

It is of utmost importance that as a researcher in social relations, I should be conscious of the ethical issues involved in the process, such as obtaining participants’ informed consent, assuring them anonymity and confidentiality (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000, Helander, 2003). Participation in the study was entirely voluntary.
The most basic ethical considerations is that researchers should not lose sight of is to obtain informed consent of the participants and their protection from any harm that might be occasioned by the act of the researcher and to be honest to the informants and tell the truth when writing up and reporting the study’s findings. Before I involved anyone in the process, I made sure that the participants understood the nature, objectives and scope of the study and that I obtained informed consent from each and every one of them. This meant to respect their rights and safeguard their welfare. Participants were guaranteed adequate privacy and confidentiality or anonymity as desired. Since their participation was entirely voluntary the participants could withhold their consent any time they wished. They were also assured that information gathered and their identity would not be released to anyone else.

Research Design and Procedures
The objective of this study is to come to a realistic understanding of the current educational reality in Somalia since the outbreak of the civil war and how the community is coping with the lack of state machinery as far as educational services are concerned. To achieve these objectives, the study sought to observe educational settings in Somalia and interview different people involved in the process of learning and teaching in order to capture their stories concerning experiences with, and attitudes toward the current education in the country. The study took the shape of a case study and since there is no specific method of data collection for case studies, I used a combination of ethnographic methods, including participant observation, in-depth interviews, and similar techniques to ensure access to the greatest possible level of information. Since objective reality can never be captured, the use of multiple methods, or triangulation, is an attempt to get a
better understanding of the phenomenon under study (Denzin and Lincoln 1998). The following were the three main methods used as instruments in this study.

**Interviews**

During my visits to the educational institutes, I conducted in-depth interviews with 13 individuals most of whom are closely associated with the current education in the country. Most interviews lasted between 30 minutes to an hour and a half. In these interviews I had a chance to keenly listen to the stories and experiences of the educators about the current and past educational practices in the country, as well as their aspirations for the future.

The interview questions for this research focused on variety of issues, including the coping capacity of the community with statelessness, participants’ own experiences in contributing to education in such circumstances and their view on what direction is education in the country taking. The principal questions dealt with how the community managed in coping with the situation and how it is trying to improve. However, while the interview process used an open-ended questions, the conversations were focused in such a way as to encourage participants to share their experiences and perspectives relative to the topic under investigation. This helped me answer my research question on the emergence of new systems, institutions and language of instruction. Research participants were fully informed about the purpose and goal of the research study and they were also encouraged to speak freely about their feelings and experiences. My primary role as a researcher was to listen to the participants’ stories. However, it was sometimes necessary to probe and ask specific questions in order to maintain focus on the research topic.
Prior to the interviews, I arranged to meet and talk with some of the people who could be included among the participants to conduct a mini-interview with them to discuss the issues under study. This helped make the issues clearer to me and make the actual interview less frightening.

**Observations**

Typically, my day in the research field consisted of visits to schools, institutions of higher learning or other educational establishments. During such visits, which often lasted from one hour to a whole day, depending on the specific situation, my main objectives were to observe the setting and if possible to conduct one or more interviews. However, most interviews and focus groups discussions were properly scheduled and held as planned. Inside educational establishments, I observed the general outlook of schools, the infrastructure and facilities. I also went into classrooms while the process of teaching and learning was taking place. I also observed students, teachers and school administrative staff and their interactions among themselves. In all my observations, I took notes of all activities and phenomena that were of interest to me, sometimes on site and other times, when the circumstances so demanded, as soon as my return from the field. These field notes became useful introduction to the data obtained through other methods, such as interviews, by setting the context in which the interview was conducted. I must say, however, that there is only so much that a researcher can observe in a limited time period.

**Focus Group Discussions**

One useful technique to get information used in the study is what Helander (2003) calls “bring-up-a-topic method” (p. 30). This is to initiate a group-discussion on a
particular topic, in a particular setting. The idea is to leave the flour to the discussants for them to engage in free discussion on the topic. Although the groups are usually spontaneously assembled, attempt is made to compose groups with representatives for different categories of people. This simple-sounding technique is, according to Helander, probably one of the most efficient techniques for cultural research in Somalia (p. 30).

In the social environment in which this study is taking place, it is appropriate and useful to organize focus group discussions in which a group of people discuss the topic under investigation (Babbie, 2001, Helander, 2003). The logic behind using focus group method of qualitative research is based “on the assumption that knowledge is socially constructed and the reality of interest is the result of social interaction” (Kleiber, 2004, p. 89). The shape of this method is to gather a small group of people chosen on the basis of common characteristics for a period of time to discuss topic of inquiry in order to gain their perceptions, opinions and attitudes on the research topic. “Participants in focus groups engage in thoughtful discussions and may even influence one another, thereby generating a lot of interests and information that would not have been generated in responses to short questions” (p. 91). The moderator might want to begin the discussion with a statement or a presentation of a video clip to generate interest. I personally found Somali educators talking thoughtfully during such discussions.

**Data Analysis**

The critical decisions and choices that the qualitative researcher makes in the design of the study are essential aspects of data analysis. The process of data analysis goes hand-in-hand with data collection throughout the study, thereby giving the researcher ample opportunity to make adjustment to any unworkable design such as
interview schedule, observational protocol or field trips to sites (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Research questions are the engine which drives the train of enquiry. The research questions of this study are formulated to set the immediate agenda for research, enable data to be collected and permit analysis to get started (Bassey, 1999).

The analysis of the data started once I was on the study site where I started notetaking, writing reflective passages and drafting summary sheets. At the end of the data collection, I began the process of coding and memo writing. While a full-scale analysis of the accumulated data was conducted upon completion of the in-depth interviews, observations and other data collection techniques, some level of data analysis was going on throughout the process.

Once the fieldwork was completed I began transcribing the data to convert them into an analysable format by using word processing program. The process of transcription was arduous, because since all the interviews I have conducted were in Somali it also involved simultaneous translation into English. After completing the coding process, my immediate concern became to discover themes in the interview narratives by grouping recurring ideas into coherent categories. Next my focus was to develop theoretical constructs by organizing themes into more abstract concepts which will not only require a more indepth reading of the interview texts but also a wider review of the literature in order to shed more lights on the issues raised by research participants (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). The process of data analysis mostly took the form of what Geertz (1973) describes as interpretation in search of meaning or “thick description” of the cultural phenomenon as told by the participants. In the process of doing this
interpretation, I sometimes had to call some of the research participants to clarify a point or seek more explanations of their stories.

**My Arrival at the Scene**

First though, I begin with my early encounter with the country at the start of my visit. I arrived in the country at a time of natural abundance when there was a plenty of rains everywhere you go. Some farms that I visited were actually flooded and in order to plant their farms, farmers were waiting for the water to recede. This was a great relief from Allah, the Almighty, from the recurrent drought that has plagued the country so frequently. People were hoping for a similar relief from the man-made calamities of civil war, chaos and lawlessness.

I would like to state here that despite the persistent security problems in the country, I did not face any hardship nor did I feel any danger during my stay there.

**The Flight from Nairobi to Mogadishu and Tension in Hudur**

I traveled in a small aircraft operated by the UN Humanitarian Office in Nairobi. The flight departed Nairobi at 7:30 in the morning. On board were four other passengers and three crew members. After a brief stopover in Garissa, in North Eastern Kenya, we landed in Hudur, a town in southwestern Somalia, where we found the residents in a state of heightened tension. There was an unusually large crowd of people in and around the airstrip. The plane had to circle over the town twice waiting for the crowd to clear from the runway. It turned out that the crowd was coming back from a funeral procession of a man who had just been executed by the local community for killing the local head of the international aid agency, Medicines San Frontiers, MSF, in the town. We were briefed by the town’s administrator who told us that the town had been in a heightened tension since
the murder and now that the culprit has been brought to justice, everything should come back to normal. Thereafter, we stopped for a while in Jowhar, a town some 80 km north of Mogadishu, to unload some consignments for one of the international aid agencies in the town. In all the places that we stopped, there was a plenty of water, some areas were nearly flooded, as a result of recent rains in the whole country. Wherever I looked I could see plenty of green and lush vegetations and happy faces of the people. Eventually, we landed at Esiley airstrip, a makeshift airport just north of Mogadishu. The airstrip was dusty but busy and, perhaps due to its close proximity to the sea, it was a scenic panorama in itself. After meeting with my acquaintances, we immediately left the airstrip at around 1:30 in the afternoon. We drove along a beautiful seaside road to the city. Along the way we passed a mini-natural harbor where a large amount of scrap metals was being exported. It was not long before we entered the city and I began to see first hand the scale of the destruction left behind by years of civil war.

Old Mogadishu and New Mogadishu (Xamar Jadid)

One clear mark of the civil war is the general destruction that one would notice everywhere one goes. This is especially true in the old downtown Mogadishu where most of government offices, headquarters of various ministries, hotels, hospitals and just about any state-owned institutions were located. Because Somalia was one of the most centralized states in Africa before the collapse and almost all public service institutions and economic production facilities were state-owned, no such institution survived the wanton destruction that took place during the civil war. Roads and other public infrastructures are some of the examples of the destruction. Some of them would require major repairs and others have been razed to the ground and need to be re-started from
It is amazing that despite of all that people are pursuing their daily lives and in many cases making some remarkable successes. Most of the business activities that have been revived are centered around the Bakaaraha Market which has sprung up and blossomed just after the state collapse. In the absence of state regulations and urban planning, the market has expanded in all directions, dislodging hundreds of residential houses in the process. In contrast, the old downtown Mogadishu and many of its landmarks are in ruin today.

Schools are some of 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. Despite the chaotic nature of the situation, I was struck by the degree of uniformity of different schools run by different organizations without obvious coordination. School children almost always wear identical uniforms in all schools, despite the fact that they are all private schools and are not under the control any regulatory authority that could have mandated the uniform. I was also equally amazed by the degree of enthusiasm, especially of the students in pursuing their education, given the extremely difficult socio-economic conditions in which schooling is taking place. An inspiring example was the story of a boy I met in Mogadishu who is a shoe shiner (caseeye) and goes to school in the morning and goes about his business in the afternoon and on weekends, Thursdays and Fridays, to support himself and his family. His was a remarkable story in this era of civil war when most of his age mates from similar background took up arms and joined the militias.

The public transportation sector, on the other hand was one of the most chaotic in the city. People use just about any means of transportation they could find. Unfortunately,
some of the means used are too inconvenient. I could not fail to observe that conflict
resolution in the transportation sector is a serious problem that has not received any
attention. In cases of traffic accidents which are becoming more and more frequent due to
the dilapidated state of the roads and increasing number of vehicles on the road,
compounded by the total absence of police or any other law enforcement agencies,
drivers often resort to old fashioned modes of solving their disputes. For example, they
could use clan mechanism by involving their respective clans, while the vehicles remain
on the spot where the accident occurred. The clans could share the cost or any other
responsibility resulting from the accident. The process could take weeks or months before
an amicable agreement is arrived at between the parties. Typically, though, the two
drivers involved in the accidents could simply agree on some form of settlement on the
spot and proceed on their respective ways without wasting time. It is when the accident
involves death or serious injury that complications arise. The private enterprise might be
ingenious in inventing new ways of coping with the crisis but public transportation still
needs a better way of handling it.

Markets are always busy and business is thriving but everybody feels that some
form of regulation would be necessary to ensure smooth running of normal activities.
Somalis are good traders and would always strive to do even better and many feel that the
atmosphere has never been better. However, it is the public space that is being neglected
today and unless something is done about it, the smooth running of the private
entrepreneurship is in serious jeopardy. This neglect of the public good, in its various
forms, is Somalia’s quintessential dilemma and perhaps explains why so many attempts
at reviving the state have so far produced no lasting results. I believe that the Somali state
did not only collapsed but was meticulously dismantled throughout the years of the civil war which did not begin only in 1991, as commonly cited, but in 1978, immediately after the disastrous war with Ethiopia. The destruction of other public institutions such as hospitals, roads and sewage system, to name but a few, is enormous and worth documenting but it is beyond the scope of this study.

**Educational Institutions**

During my field work, I visited many educational institutions of different levels, from primary to university, where I observed the process of learning and teaching and talked with educators to get the best possible picture of the situation. As examples of the educational institutions that function under the current statelessness, I will give a general account of those educational institutions that I was able to visit during my fieldwork. The following institutions are only those ones that I was able to see for myself and are not in any way the only ones in existence in the country or even in the areas I visited.

Here, I would like to state for the record that these institutions are just a few samples of many more that exist today. Therefore, although they might be some of the finest educational institutions that have been established in the country since the collapse of the state, my selections should not be construed as being the only or the best ones in existence.

First, I will start with the tertiary level institutions that I was able to visit. They are all in the Mogadishu area. Again I would like to make it clear that these are by not means the only ones in existence in Somalia today. There are certainly many more institutions in Mogadishu and in many other cities around the country that I could not visit.
The Somali Institute for Management and Administrative Development, SIMAD, is a tertiary level college that offers diploma and degree courses in business, management, accounting and information technology. It is one of several institutes of higher learning that have been established recently to cater for the growing number of secondary school graduates looking for opportunities for further studies. Although, it has not yet been classified as a university, for all intent and purposes, it is a university level institute that offers university level courses and attracts many students because of its perceived professional orientation. The institute’s campus is housed is a rather large and impressive compound surrounded by high walls with a well guarded gate. The compound is decorated with beautiful gardens and flowers which are intended to make its atmosphere conducive to learning.

The institute has well-structured administrative units, such as the dean’s office, academic affairs, registrar’s office, the secretary, examination section and accounting and cashier. Other facilities are two computer labs with a VSAT (very small aperture terminal) wireless broadband Internet connection and a modest library which also sells textbooks to students at a reduced price. There is also a mosque, a guesthouse and a restaurant inside the compound. I was impressed by the level of professionalism and smooth running of office routine. There are about 1,500 students taking different courses in the institute. Many privately-arranged minibuses bring students to and from the institute. Students play soccer and other sports on a small playground within the compound, especially on Thursday afternoons.
After the general visit to the compound and administrative units, I then visited academic units and classes in session. The biggest class was the preparatory class which is taken by new students during the first semester or the first six months of their study. This class has some 120 students and is held in a fairly large room which also serves as a conference hall known as the East African Conference Hall. Instruction was in English, interspersed with Somali translation or explanation. The class was mixed of both genders with girls sitting in one section near the front rows. Other classes that I visited include business management, accounting and computer hardware assembling lab. Only one of the instructors was a female and several of the teaching staff were non-Somalis, coming from Kenya, India and Pakistan. All administrative positions were held by Somalis. The institute is highly regarded by the general population. In addition to offering a variety of business and management courses and attracting many students, it has organized several trade fairs on several occasions. Taxi drivers and everybody else seem to know it rather well, perhaps due to trade fairs or radio advertisement. On one occasion, I was traveling on a taxi and was struggling to describe the directions of getting to the institute to the taxi driver but before I could complete my sentence he surprised me by saying: why don’t you just say: SIMAD? I know where you want to go.

**Mogadishu University**

I visited the main, albeit temporary, campus of Mogadishu University which is a well organized and growing institution. This is by far the largest of several private universities that have emerged after the destruction of the Somali education. First, I went to the office of graduate studies which coordinates a program that offers post-graduate diploma and masters degrees in education. I was told that students were having their final
examination. I met some of the professors. Later on, I toured the administrative unit which is in a separate building. There I was briefed by two senior officials of the university on the historical background, general features and development projects of the university. In contrast with the general chaos and lack of organized modern institutions, I noticed a well-knit administrative structure in place. I was shown the architectural design of the future campus of the university under construction.

Then, I toured the new campus under construction. It is a huge site some 15-20 kilometers northwest of Mogadishu. The area where the new campus is being constructed is a valley-like oasis that has not been developed yet but it is certain that the area would see a booming development once the campus is opened and the university moves in. The area is already named as the university quarter. Once constructed it will be a nice campus the like of which is not there in Somalia at the moment. Already, the new campus has taken shape and some colleges and department blocks are near complete. If everything goes as planned the new campus could be ready by the end of 2005 and the university could move in. I also visited the College of Nursing which is an ambitious department with a lot of potentials. Being the only institution that trains registered nurses in the country, it is already rendering an important service to the health sector in the country. I noticed that students and instructors were very enthusiastic. Then I visited the computer science/IT department. I saw students being trained hands on in computer programming.

I had a brief meeting with the president of Mogadishu University, Dr Ali Sheikh Ahmed Abubakar, in his office in the university’s administration unit. The president was warm in receiving me and said he was happy to welcome me as a guest of the university. He is one those Somali educators who left the luxury of job abroad and came back to
contribute to the reconstruction of education system in the country following the catastrophic destruction of education and state collapse during the long years of the civil war. Describing the current situation of the Somali society how they appreciate visits by outsiders to see them recover from the effects of the civil war, he used the metaphor of a sick person who is recuperating after an illness. He said such a visit will morally boost the society and contribute to their recovery. He summed up the achievements made by educators thus far by saying that they have tried to create hope for students, parents and the Somali people at large that they can achieve something, engage in education, teaching and learning. He added that the current educational experience has taught the Somali people how to rely on themselves. It also changed the bad old culture of leaving the role of education to the state.

Mogadishu University is not certainly the only university in the country at the moment but it was one of earliest to be established following the state collapse. Today it is probably the largest and when its new campus is completed it will be the only one with such a facility of its own.

**Islamic University, Mogadishu**

This university is a small but well-organized institute of higher education based on Islamic teachings. It was established in September 2001. I visited the university and met with the institution’s president, Mahmud Isa, and some other officials and faculty members. I was briefed on the history of the university and the functions of its various academic units. Some 350 students are currently enrolled in the university and 24 faculty members, including five with Ph.D. and 10 with M.A., teach here. The university consists of two faculties or academic departments: Shariah and Education. The university admits
students with secondary school certificates. However, students who come from the informal education sector are given the chance to study at the university after a year of preparatory course. They have to pass an admission test as well.

I toured classes in session. Some classes were for males only, others for females only and some were mixed with separate sections for each sex. Classes were spacious and not overcrowded. The university has a relatively well-stocked library. The campus is small but impressive and like most educational institutions in the city is in a rented facility.

**Banadir University, Mogadishu**

This is a small but interesting institution in the sense that it boasts the only medical college in the country at the moment. This fact is crucially important due to the dire need of the community for medical services. The university has been in existence since September 2002. While visiting its campus my first impression was that it was very small by neat. The university’s president told me that the university was financed solely through donations by Somali businesspeople and tuition fees paid by the students. I was also told that there were Somali students who came from Europe to study medicine in the university. In addition to the college of medicine, the university has two other colleges; education and computer sciences.

While I was there my attention was drawn to the road in front of the university which was being refurbished and when I asked who was paying the cost of the construction, I was told that the university was paying. This surprised me, because it is a rarity in Somalia these days for private institutions or individuals to do maintenance work on public facilities.
Banadir Teachers Training Institute, Mogadishu
This is a new teachers training institute offering a two-year diploma to secondary school graduates who intend to teach in primary schools. The institute has been established to produce new teachers to fill the gap in teacher shortage in the country. It operates two-shifts, where female teacher trainees take their courses in the morning and male trainees in the afternoon.
There were about 120 students in the two afternoon shift classes when I visited the institute. Teachers seemed well-trained and motivated. The institute is small but serves a very useful purpose and fills a crucial gap in today’s educational efforts.

The following are the Arabic medium schools in Mogadishu that I was able to visit during my stay there. These schools are affiliated to FPENS, the largest educational umbrella organizations in the country at the moment. This does not necessarily mean that all Arabic medium schools are affiliated to FPENS but since they get some useful facilities, such as facilitation in exit examinations and preparation of certificates that would likely be the case.

Ahmed Gurey Secondary School, Mogadishu
This is one of the biggest secondary schools in Mogadishu. The school is housed in an impressive compound with three large two-storey buildings and a mosque. One of the buildings is newly constructed, intended to be a science laboratories. The other two buildings comprise of classrooms, offices and other facilities. Adjacent to the school building is another building which serves as a dormitory or hostel for some 120 orphan students fully sponsored by the school or its parent organization, African Muslims Agency.
The school is huge by Somali standards and has a student body of 1350, 22 teaching staff and 10 more support staff. Of the 22 or so teachers, four are Egyptians teaching science subjects. The rest are Somalis. The school follows a three-year high school schooling system after nine years of primary education. Due to the size of student population and space limitation, the school employs double-shift system, with Form Two and Three (11th and 12th grade) students attending morning session from 7:00 AM to 12:00 noon and Form One (10th grade) students attending afternoon session from 1:00 PM in order to accommodate all students.

Classrooms are spacious with students sitting on benches in rows. Class size is about 40 to 50 students on the average. Most classes are for boys only or girls only but some are mixed with girls sitting on one side and boys on the other. The arrangement depends on the need of the school and availability of resources, such as teachers and space. Instruction is in Arabic except the Somali and English language subjects. In all, there are 10 subjects taught in the school: Arabic, English, Somali, Islamic education, biology, physics, chemistry, mathematics, history and geography. All students wear a bright school uniform: white shirt and black pants for boys and orange jilbab (a long female dress) for girls. One of the largest rooms serves as a teachers lounge or staff room where teachers and staff rest and can leave their belongings while in class. It also serves as a conference hall where school meetings are held. From its general appearance, it looked to me that there were order and discipline in the school compound and classrooms and students appeared well-motivated.
Mus’ab Bin Umayr Primary School, Mogadishu
This school was established and managed by a local NGO, Tawakal Islamic Association. The school is housed in a modest but good building that is owned by the school. The building consists of administrative offices and classrooms. Students are in separate classrooms for boys and girls within the same building but they share most of the public facilities, like hallways, library, and playground. Instruction is in Arabic and English taught as a foreign language. I toured almost all classes and found teachers in control of the learning process.

The small but well-knit management seemed to be motivated. They told me that, unlike other schools which were established and supported by international charities, this school came out of a local initiative by former Somali teachers in Ministry of Education and Somali National University. They did not get support from Somalis in the country. All they received was some contribution from Somali community in the United Kingdom. Later on, an international non-governmental organization, NGO, from Sweden helped them in constructing three more classrooms, because of personal involvement of the NGO’s Somali country director.

The school currently has some 450 students, including 120 orphans. Teachers are not paid fixed salaries. Instead, they get irregular pay from the modest fees collected from the students. That means that only what is collected is distributed to teachers.

Mahmud Harbi Primary School, Mogadishu
This school is one of the largest and oldest primary schools in Mogadishu (since the state collapse). It was established in February 1993, at the height of the civil war. The school is housed in a nice building which used to be a former government school but has
been renovated by African Muslims Agency, the charity that established and runs the school.

I toured most of the classes, two or more classes for every grade, and found well-motivated students and equally dedicated teachers engaged in the process of teaching and learning. I also found well-organized administrative offices and staff.

In this school there are some 1530 students, including 520 girls. The school employs 42 teachers, including nine part-time teachers and five female teachers. Instruction takes place in Arabic but the school is facing a problem of providing textbooks. The curriculum followed in the school is a modified version of the old Somali national curriculum upgraded with the help of Islamic Development Bank, IDB, and UNESCO.

**Al-Fajr Secondary School, Mogadishu**

This is one of the largest schools in Mogadishu. It is located in the north side of the city, once divided from the southern part with a green line. The dividing line is largely non-existent now though, but the north is still perceived by many as less safe. So is the extreme southern part of the city.

The school is housed in a huge three-storey building owned by the school. The compound consists of administrative blocks and classrooms. Most grades consist of three classes of about 50 students each. In most cases, boys and girls are in separate classrooms but there are certain classrooms which are mixed gender. The school has a fairly well-equipped science laboratory, the biology lab in one room and the physics and chemistry lab in another room. The school compound was extremely clean and well-organized. Once inside the school, I felt a sense of calmness and I thought the atmosphere was conducive to learning.
Imam Shafi’i Primary School, Mogadishu
As a follow up visit to this school which I had visited earlier, I toured the school while classes were in session during the afternoon shift. This school is very orderly and well-organized. I was told that it is one of the oldest in town. The medium of instruction is Arabic. Teachers and students were enthusiastic and learning was in progress. I was impressed with how students were eager to participate in class activities. In one good example, a second grade student, a girl about 8-year old, was solving a math problem, a subtraction problem. The girl confidently and meticulously calculated and solved the problem. She did the calculation correctly using her fingers and putting down the chalk in her hand each time she does so and picking it again when she finished counting. All this while she was writing the calculation and the answer on the blackboard without looking at the students, the teacher or myself. The teacher then asked the class to confirm if the answer was or was not correct and they all said it was correct in unison.

The following are the English medium schools that I was able to visit. They are all in Mogadishu. Some of them are affiliated to SAFE, one of the two educational umbrella organizations in the country, while others are not.

Sheikh Abdisamad Commercial Secondary School, Mogadishu
This is a new specialized school in its first year. There are 112 students in the school studying commercial and business classes. The school employs seven teachers, including two Kenyan teachers. The school is a local initiative and operates in rented premises. Classes seem to be well-organized and students well-motivated. The curriculum is intended to prepare the students either to join commercial colleges and universities or to go straight to the job market as specially trained or skilled workforce, in public or private sectors or become self-employed entrepreneurs.
This school is perhaps the only one of its kind and level. The principal told me that the school is trying to follow the footsteps of a similar commercial school which existed before the civil war.

**Al-Masal Primary & Secondary School, Mogadishu**

This is a largely private school that was established and run independently by the principal and teachers. It seemed to me that the number of students was huge and that the students were in serious mood of learning. I met the principal, Mr. Roble, who briefed me on various aspects of education in the school. He told me that some 1,700 students are enrolled in the school which employs 57 teachers, two-thirds of them university graduates. The school is managed by local NGO and financed through the school fees which students or their parents pay in Somali currency, unlike most schools in Mogadishu which require payment in US dollars.

The monthly fee structure in the school is:

A. 180,000 Somali shillings (US$ 12) for secondary level

B. 150,000 Somali shillings (US$ 10) for middle/intermediate level

C. 120,000 Somali shillings (US$ 8) for elementary level

I came to know that this fee structure is very much what most schools in Mogadishu charge but schools in outlying regions where I was able to visit charge much less than this amount, as little as $2 a month, because the community there cannot afford much.

On one of my visits to the school, on Wednesday, December 8th, 2004, I went to the school early in the morning (7:30 AM) and witnessed the daily morning assembly when children assemble in the school compound and class representatives make
presentation on various social issues. On that morning a ten-grade girl was making her presentation and was quite passionate in her arguments and received a big applause.

The school is big with a fairly large student population but the school building is in a dilapidated shape. Many parts of the building which is a former government school building are in disrepair. Some classes are held in big halls which have not been properly separated. So, the noise in one classroom is equally heard in the adjacent ones. In short, the school looked chaotic but the process of teaching and learning seemed to be going well. Teachers and students were equally enthusiastic and keen on teaching and learning respectively.

I also visited classes in session. I noticed that students were eager to hear from visitors. English and Somali were used as the medium of instruction. Then, I interview the deputy principal in charge of secondary level, Mr. Mukhtar Geedi Ibrahim, a teacher himself, who told me the story behind the school, its achievements and the difficulties it is facing. He also spoke about his view on the future of education in Somalia under the present circumstances.

**Hamar Boarding and Kindergarten School, Mogadishu (Hoyga Xamar)**

This is a reasonably large school in a large school building with a spacious compound. The institution is basically intended to be a boarding school but only about 350 of the 1707 students are actually in the boarding. The rest are day scholars. Boarding schools are not common in Somalia. Like most schools in the city, the school works on a double shift basis. The school has all the different grades ranging from pre-school (kindergarten) to grade 11 (Form Three) which will proceed to grade 12 (Form Four) next year. The school adopted the Kenyan school curriculum using English as the medium of
instruction. However, the school principal told me that the school was geared towards the British general Secondary Education, GSE, certificate and has already registered as a GSE examination center. The school also offers, as part of its curriculum, traditional Islamic religious education.

The fees structures range from US$ 10 for the day scholars and US$ 35 for students in the boarding section. The school has several properly marked school buses used as a means of transportation for students to and from their homes.

I went into some classes in session. The learning atmosphere was commendable and students were enthusiastic about the process. I was particularly impressed by one of the pre-school (kindergarten) classes. The teacher seemed well-trained and dedicated. The pupils aged from 4 to 6 years were well-behaved and they were cutely following the lessons. When asked by the teacher to sing songs or read some Islamic prayers, they did it in chorus. Each of them had a small wooden slate to write on with chalk. They quickly erased the writing with their hands wet with saliva. They were also writing on notebooks with pencils. Other classes were also neat and organized.

This school is a good example of a self-sustained educational institution that was set up by Somali educators.

**Ablaal Secondary School, Mogadishu**

This is a large school that offers, according to its principal, English medium education. It operates in a rented facility which looked reasonably in good shape and spacious. Instruction is mainly in English and Somali, except Islamic education which is taught in Arabic.
The school was started by teachers who used to run private English language schools. The idea of the school developed from those private language schools that were converted into a full-fledged modern school. The school uses a mixture of textbooks. In science subjects it uses mainly Kenyan textbooks and in social studies it uses old Somali textbooks. The school charges students monthly school fees of 150,000 Somali shillings, the equivalent of 10 US dollars, an amount which is sufficient to pay teachers and cover the administrative cost of the school.

From its general outlook the school appeared to me to be well-organized and it looked like any other school in terms of student composition, uniform, classroom layout, etc. This school is also an example of how a self-sustained educational institution can be set up by the community without external support.

The following are some schools in two southwestern regions that I was able to visit during my stay in Somalia. Again, some of these schools are affiliated to one of the two educational umbrella organizations in Mogadishu, FPENS, but others have no expressly stated affiliation. The schools are in Bay and Bakool regions in southwestern Somalia.

**Al-Qalam Primary School, Baidoa**

This school is operated by a local non-profit organization called Hunayn Charitable Society. Touring this school I felt a sense of sympathy for the conditions of the school and noticed a clear need for improvement. However, being one of few successfully functioning schools in the whole town, the school is doing rather well. The school was started in 1993 by teachers with the help of a local NGO and was supported on different occasions by international aid agencies and local NGOs.
There are some 600 students and a dozen or so teachers in the school. The school uses a modified version of the old Somali national curriculum with technical support from UN agencies. The medium of instruction is Arabic. Although independently run, the school follows the guidelines of the Arabic umbrella educational organization, Formal Private Educational Network in Somalia, FPENS.

The school is in a fairly well-maintained building which was a former government school building with a spacious compound. I was told that the same compound was once used as a mass grave during the civil war and famine that killed hundreds of thousands of people in this region in early 1990s and earned this city the nick name of “the city of death”. Students pay a monthly fee of 25,000 Somali shillings which is equivalent to US$ 1.50.

**Baidoa Model School, Baidoa**

This is a well-managed new school that offers all grades from 1 to 12. It is the only secondary school in this town. The school is managed locally but was built and supported by the United Arab Emirates Red Crescent Society. The school is in a very large compound which also houses a new orphanage where some of the students in the school live. The class size is about 45 students. The school building is well-maintained and neat. It consists of classrooms and an administrative block. It has a modest library and separate toilets for boys and girls. All the classrooms are in the same building, moving in anti-clockwise direction.

I was told that due to factional fighting earlier in the year in the town, the number of students has decreased. Currently, some 450 students are enrolled in the school. About 90 students are in the secondary section.
Buulow Primary School, Hudur

This is one of few primary schools that are still functioning in Hudur, in Bakool Region, southwestern Somalia. The school is facing some serious problems in terms of finances and management. The school has elementary grades from 1 to 6 but there are only four teachers to teach all classes. Instruction is in Arabic but it seems that for lack of any curriculum guideline, teachers experiment whatever teaching materials they can lay their hands on. Due to flooding in its usual location, the school is temporarily housed in a recently renovated large school building which was a former government secondary school. I was told that it was renovated with the help of Adventist Development and Relief Agency, ADRA with funding from United States Agency for International Development, USAID.

The school charges students a monthly fee of 20,000 Somali shillings which is equivalent to US$ 1.30. The headmaster of the school, Sheikh Omar, and his colleagues told me that parents in this town are hard pressed to pay any amount as school fees. This is due to the difficult economic condition prevailing in most outlying areas where commercial activities are few and almost no jobs are available for the residents.

Despite these and other problems, the process of teaching and learning was going on, rather well. I toured classes in session while students were sitting for their term examinations. Classrooms were not full but students seemed motivated and well-behaved.
CHAPTER FOUR
THE CURRENT STATE OF EDUCATION IN SOMALIA
In view of the total destruction of educational institutions and systems in the country throughout the years of the civil war, the current efforts can be seen as starting from scratch. However, this is only true with regard to the poor state of material conditions resulting from the destruction. As we will see from the data as explained in this chapter, the society has various social and cultural networks still in tact and ready to be utilized as a coping mechanism in these difficult times. These are resources that, according to Freire (1978), cannot be destroyed by forces of violence. Unlike buildings and even books, social networks can remain intact despite obvious hardships.

There is a growing concern that due to the disruption to social institutions caused by the long running civil strife in Somalia, schools might be one of the first casualties. Understandably, in these situations only absolutely necessary services such as food and medicine are normally given priority and education is put off until the conditions improve. The Somali crisis is taking far too long to resolve and in the process a whole generation of children risk losing the chance to have any formal education. The absence of schooling will only prolong the already serious socio-political problem in the country. Therefore, the society had to make concerted efforts to ensure that social institutions, such as schools, are set up and children go to school despite obvious difficulties. The situation is far from perfect and is likely to remain so until the many problems, including insecurity, are tackled effectively. In spite of the lack of security, it is heartening to note that commendable efforts have been made to revive education. The findings of this study attest to these efforts and the obstacles that educators face in carrying out their work.
This chapter presents the findings of the study. As indicated in the methodology chapter the analysis of data yielded an array of topics organized into various themes that are in line with the research objectives. The themes are then woven into several theoretical constructs to help understand the underlying ideas of participants’ stories.

Here, I must say from the onset that what I am describing here is the process, rather than the product, of education and efforts made by various actors in the field. Similarly, I would like to state that the study is not about the curriculum structure of any particular school or level of education. I realize this makes the study broader and it might appear as if it cannot be accomplished in one single study but my aim is to give a general description of the types of education that are emerging under these circumstances and more importantly the role of the community in assuming the responsibility of running this vital public sector that has been left by the collapsed state.

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. The examples in the education sector are by no means unique but one of the most inspiring experiments that need to be encouraged further.

In the following section I present the study data in the form of recurring themes that have emerged from my interviews with the research participants as shown in their individual stories. Although the themes indicate the aggregate views of the participants, they would be best understood when read within the context of the theory-driven constructs. The following are the major themes of the various interviews I conducted with 13 individuals and the focus group discussion with another group of 14 individuals. The
themes have been arrived at after an elaborate coding process that tried to analyze the participants’ stories within the context of their respective views. The recurring themes in which the date is presented are:

1. Life in Stateless Situation
2. Main Actors/Coping Mechanism
3. Emerging Systems
4. Role of Education in Societal Rehabilitation

As you will see shortly, several sub-headings are discussed under these themes. Although the sub-headings can be discussed separately, I see a common thread between the sub-headings under each theme.

1. Life in Stateless Situation

How Did the Statelessness Emerge?

Statelessness in Somalia emerged as a result of the collapse of the state and destruction of state institutions that followed. This descent into the statelessness began long before the current civil war but it culminated in the violent overthrow of the despotic military regime led by Gen Mohamed Siad Barre in January 1991. The ruler and his close associates were driven out of the capital Mogadishu after fierce street fighting that continued most of the last three months of 1990 and January 1991. They initially camped in a remote region in south-central Somalia, hoping to come back again, but were finally driven into exile. Government employees, most of whom were perceived by the rebels as, in one way or another, related to the ruling clan, had to flee from the ensuing violence that was initially fuelled by emotions of hatred and revenge.
The state collapse was so dramatic that virtually all state institutions ceased to exist with the overthrow of the regime and flight of the dictator and his close associates. These institutions not only stopped functioning but all physical infrastructure, such as school buildings, hospitals, banks, military and police facilities and other government ministries, were looted beyond recognition, taken and sold or simply destroyed by armed militiamen (Brons, 2001:29).

It is true that the regime was dictatorial and the seeds of the violence were sewn during its rule but it is equally true that rebels that overthrew it were hopelessly divided among themselves. They immediately turned against each other in a civil war that led to more destruction and completed the state collapse and brought a large section of the population to the brink of starvation before a major international intervention took place in 1992.

**Institutions of Statelessness**

Perhaps because security is seen as the most basic role of the modern state and maintenance of public order has been a virtual state monopoly (Shearing & Stenning, 1983), it is in the political and security spheres that statelessness is clearly seen in Somalia today. Although, Somalia is described by some scholars (Menkhaus, 1998) as stateless but not anarchic, there are a host of security problems that ordinary people face everyday. In spite of that, the society has been relying on a variety of local means of conflict resolution in order to cope with the state collapse. One striking feature of this system is that most political decisions are made at the local level. This localization of the decision-making process might be what has kept the otherwise fluid situation from deterioration into anarchy.
In the business sector, despite the absence of the state, it appears that some economic and social institutions have emerged to fill the vacuum left by the destruction of state institutions. Some of these institutions have achieved tangible successes and some are struggling to survive in the hostile environment. Little (2003) notes that in the absence of the central authority rural pastoral mobility has actually been strengthened. Since 1991 Somalia had not had a central government of any sort but surprisingly enough, despite political discord and continued war in some regions, the Somali economy stumbled but managed to survive with no one at the helm to manage it. Private business in some sub-sectors has been successful in some respects and this success is an encouraging factor. This is not to suggest that there are no problems facing the economy. To the contrary, the market is very fragile and thin and often hit by natural and man-made disasters, including droughts, floods, export bans, and introduction of competing currencies of limited acceptability (Mubarak, 1997).

In spite of that, many private sector enterprises are coping remarkably well with the statelessness using different coping strategies. A recent report by the World Bank indicated that, judging by the Somali experience, it may be easier than is commonly thought for private business to function where the state is absent or extremely weak. The report concluded in its findings that different private business enterprises have been “importing governance” (Nenova & Harford, 2004) in order to keep functioning. In particular, they have been using the following coping strategies, among other things, to cope with the absence of the state.

1. Certain sectors, such as air transportation safety, telecommunication, currency stability and company law have largely relied on foreign jurisdictions or
Institutions. Air transportation has mushroomed since the collapse of the state with almost every city having its one or more – sometimes makeshift – airstrips where private airplanes land everyday with merchandises and passengers. The airplanes are registered and maintained in one of the neighboring countries, such as Kenya, Djibouti, or Ethiopia or in United Arab Emirates. Air transportation was largely limited to few airports in major cities before the collapse of the state. The telecommunication sector has also teamed up with international telephone companies to deliver services at a competitive rate. According to some estimates, a call from a Somali mobile telephone is generally cheaper and clearer than a call from anywhere else in Africa, due to the lack of regulation (Somalia calling: an unlikely, 2005). The currency market is heavily dollar-based.

2. Other business entities have made use of the clans and other local networks of trust to help with contract enforcement in place litigation in courts of law. The best example for this kind of strategy is the practices of the hawala remittance or money transfer companies which perform a vital service to the Somali society wherever they are. They deliver the money sent by members of the Somali community in the diaspora to their family members back home faster than conventional banks and at a competitive commission rate. The remittances to the country from Somalis in the Diaspora amount, according to some estimates, to about US$825 million annually which is roughly 60 per cent of the nation’s Gross National Product, GNP (Somalia from resilience towards, 2006).
3. In most cases, however, transactions have been simplified to the extent that they need no intervention of clan or external mechanism. Most commercial transactions, electricity and water supply fall under this category. However, the situation is far from perfect and there are numerous problems that need state regulations. For example, air traffic safety is a real concern that private companies are not able to solve. One of the best performing sectors is the telecommunication companies which offer relatively cheap rate. But they operate in a rather chaotic way. With no tariff or other arrangements among the various competing telephone companies, people are often forced to carry as many as three or four cellular telephones to be able to communicate with other people who carry other cellular telephones. This is obviously hard for many to do. The most neglected sector are those areas that only perform services of a public good nature, such as security and roads where no one is investing as a private enterprise. The country, with the exception of Somaliland in the north, lacks organized courts that handle litigation and dispute resolution. The Islamic courts that have been established in and around Mogadishu perform some useful security operations but they are not real courts of law to which individuals go for litigation (Nenova & Harford, 2004). Similarly, there are no prisons with the exception of some detention centers that belong to the Islamic courts, where inmates are kept at the request of family members or powerful creditors who are supposed to pay for the service and feed the prisoners.

The present statelessness may be romanticized by some but for most Somalis it is untenable and the state has to be re-established, preferably on more sound principles of equality and good governance. The community is coping in some aspects of public life
under statelessness but it would be an illusion to conclude that there is no need for a state. The most dramatic feature of the multi-faceted Somali crisis is the state collapse. Hence, restoration of the state should be a priority as Samatar (2002) put it: “The Somali catastrophe manifests itself most acutely in the death of public power. Therefore, any serious attempt at restoration of civic identity and productive coexistence must attend to the remaking of the state – a national state”. (p. 238). Although community involvement is key in the success of common interest institutions such as education, state support of community participatory efforts is crucial in solidifying those efforts and safeguarding the results. Emphasizing this point, Putnam, Feldstein & Cohen (2003) said: “The argument sometimes heard that civil society alone can solve public issues if only the state would get out of the way is simply silly.” (p. 273)

In addition to business enterprises, educational institutions have also sprung up quite haphazardly in all parts of the country. In many respects, this was an emulation of the successes made in the business sector. It is worth noting in this regard that it is the local population that is interested in education because children who are always the main victims of the protracted conflict can only protected through education. This is true in all war-torn societies.

In order to produce the desired outcome, public interest institutions can best function when community participates under state protection. That is what most Somalis I talked to told me they believe. They think the community should participate fully in providing public services but the state should also be there to protect the weaker members of the community. For instance, Abdirahman Sheikh said: “State intervention is inevitable for any lasting development to be achieved, because the state would cater for
the poorer families who are majority of the people” (Interview, December 2004). Many educators involved in schools realize that private institutions cannot fully meet the present need for education. In other words, what has been started by private institutions must be expanded and protected by state regulations. Stressing this point, Ahmed Abdullahi said:

The current education needs a state. The people and private institutions have done what they could do but the role of the state is missing. Schools were started and are being managed with whatever resources available but how much of the need could be met in this way? We need institutions and colleges to train the administrative and professionals and teachers of various subjects in secondary schools. We need to increase the percentage of students going to school (Interview, December 2004).

Many educators realize that despite the current successes there is only so much that private education could provide and there are areas that only a state can cover. For example Mohamed Gacal feels strongly that the present arrangements are only temporary. Elaborating more on this, he said:

I think the society cannot handle education without a state. The schools that have been established today are only there out of necessity. So, whatever education we have today is only a temporary arrangement. Access to education is seriously impeded. Only about 20% of school age children go to school. The situation is even worse in the regions outside Mogadishu. Also, because education is not free and a system of social classes has been created where only a small section of the society can afford to pay for education. This is a new phenomenon in Somalia (Focus Group Discussion, December 2004).
The present education is never an alternative to the state-run education, because private education will never give equal access to all the people due to the fact that it is, by nature and material constraint, limited and the people who cannot afford to pay for the cost of education.

After all these years of statelessness, it appears as though most people I talked to are still hoping for the state to come and establish schools again. This is particularly the case in remote areas where the community cannot afford the school fees charged by private schools. Sheikh Omar, the principal of a primary school in Hudur, said: “It seems that the society is waiting for the state to establish schools for them, especially in this region” (Interview, December 2004). Farah Abdulqadir expresses similar sentiments: “education is one of the public services that are waiting for the state to provide” (Interview, January 2005).

One important reason why the state is seen as necessary is the hope that it will expand schools to remote areas where private individuals and organizations do not operate, because the community there is too poor to afford to pay the cost. Similarly, in spite of some successes, current schools can cover far less than the capacity of the nation, even if compared to the last decade before the state collapsed. State involvement is likely to increase the capacity of schools and give access to education to larger sections of the community. Farah Abdulqadir underscored this point when he said: “I believe that unless there is a state education policy to achieve a better access, we will never reach the desired level but steps can be taken to increase it and that should be done by the whole world” (Interview, January 2005).
However, as is the case elsewhere in the world there are Somalis who believe that state intervention should be minimized as far as possible and the society should be able to maintain public services on their own. They think the current situation in Somalia is a healthy start of community self-sustenance. This feeling is most likely to be expressed by people who live in the Mogadishu area where a relative success has been achieved in education compared to remote regions. Echoing that feeling, a head of a school in Mogadishu made this remark: “Life without a state has been experimented in Mogadishu and can actually be seen today that it is, indeed, possible.” (Abdirahman Sheikh, Interview, December 2004). Similarly, Abdikarim Hussein, a senior official of a major agency sponsoring many schools, thinks that the society has learned to live without the state. Talking about the society’s self-sufficiency, he said:

I think necessity taught the Somali society that we can do without the state not only in education but in all other public services. Education has so far been weak in the regions but the situation is beginning to change. Most of the successes that have been achieved are due to self-sufficiency and awareness on the part of the community (Focus Group Discussion, December 2004).

Despite the apparent difference on the need for the state to intervene in education, there seems to be a consensus on what it should do and what it should leave for private individuals and organizations to provide. Those who believe that state intervention is important think that it cannot provide everything. Its role should be limited to regulations and expansion, so that the present successes are protected and new schools are established to serve more people. On this Farah Abdulqadir said:
A state is necessary but it will not take over the whole education. Rather, it will complete the project that has been started by the community, because now is the time when the society should assume the responsibility for themselves and not rely on the state (Interview, January 2005).

This comes out of a growing realization by Somalis that even if the state is re-established, the time when the state would provide for everything is over. “We would like to have a state that pays for all expenses of education for students and even give them allowances but that is not going to happen” (Ahmed Abdullahi, Interview, December 2004).

 Asked what they think would be the future role of the state in the future, many people see a limited role for the state. They see any state that would be set up after all these years of civil war and statelessness is likely to be weak in the near future. Nonetheless, it will have an important role to play. Commenting on this, a university professor said:

It is foreseeable that the state would not be strong in the next 10 years and would only have supervisory authority, instead. At most, it would have in each major city a large primary school that would admit students from poor families who cannot afford to go to other schools (Dr. Mohamed Hussein, Interview, November 2004).

This inability on the part of the state that would be established is due to the weak basis and lack of resources following long years of statelessness. Educators also believe that any future state would be radically different from the type of state that used to control all aspects of public life. “The old socialist-type system of education where the state supports every school is not going to come back” (Dr. Mohamed Hussein, Interview November 2004).
There is a general sense of optimism among educators I talked to about the future of education in the country. Many educators I spoke with expressed their optimism that whether or not the state is re-established education will progress even further.

“Generally-speaking, education in Somalia will progress with or without the state” (Ahmed Abdullahi, Interview, December 2004). The prevailing view is that even when the state is re-established, it will have to cooperate, not clash, with the private education that has taken root during the last two decades of statelessness. Dr. Mohamed Hussein describes the future scenario as he sees it this way:

I believe that private education and state-run education would go hand-in-hand. I am very optimistic about the new education in Somalia. The fact that no state is coming soon does not make me pessimistic. I believe that even if there is a state it would not be able to support or fund education (Interview, November 2004).

Another educator expressed similar sentiments when he said: “I believe the future would be bright if we cooperate with each other and have a state that completes what is left of the process. It would not be easy to dismantle the process that the society has experimented.” (Ahmed Abdullahi, Interview, December 2004).

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. This is exactly what Ahmed Abdullahi said while explaining various factors contributed to the success of current education.

The first step was taken by education professionals, because without their first step nothing would have started. The second step was that of parents who sent their
children to school and paid for the school fees. The third factor was the diminishing hope of getting the state back (Interview, December 2004).

However, this optimism under the current statelessness is not shared by some people I met in other regions in the countryside outside Mogadishu. The community in these parts of the country cannot afford to pay the cost of schools due to the economic trend of concentration of wealth in Mogadishu. Therefore, their view is that unless the state is re-established soon, schools would remain in the poor state that they are now. Talking about the sustainability of education under the current conditions in some regions, a principal in one such region, Bakool, made this assessment:

Some regions can survive without the state as they have managed so far with some well-established schools and universities. In these regions, unless there are concerted efforts by educators from the region with outside financial help, current education cannot be sustained without the state (Sheikh Omar, Interview, December 2004).

This disparity among regions has to do with the economic conditions of the local communities. In Mogadishu and other major urban centers, where most businesses are concentrated, the community can afford to pay school fees, whereas in rural areas and small towns the community cannot afford to pay school fees. Therefore, few schools, if any, are functioning there.

As an illustration of how educational institutions can function under the statelessness, I will give in the following section a brief description of some of the new educational institutions that have emerged and achieved some success under the current statelessness. To a large extent, these 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).

There are, however, some efforts to establish institutions that would provide some form of regulation to the various private schools. Although nascent, some of these bodies have
already taken shape. The following are the educational umbrella organizations that have already been put in place.

**Educational Umbrella Organizations**

One of the most important roles of the state that is conspicuously absent from Somali public life, in addition to the provision of law and order, is its regulatory authority. This is noticeable in all walks of life, including education where initially schools have been set up by private individuals and groups without coordination among themselves. In an effort to initiate some form of regulation in the education sector, at this otherwise chaotic time, educational practitioners involved in school management have achieved a tremendous success in coordinating their activities. A good example of this coordination is the recent establishment of two educational networks that coordinate the running of most schools in the country. The networks are seen as a new mechanism to institutionalize the efforts that have already been made or are being made, as well as to regulate the process that has hitherto mushroomed unregulated. Currently there are two main educational networks or umbrella organizations but since this is a new phenomenon, many similar steps are likely to be taken if and when it proved useful. In the following section I will give a brief description of the two networks, their emergence and their perceived role in education.

**FPENS**

One of the networks is the Formal Private Educational Network in Somalia, (FPENS), which is an umbrella organization that coordinates most of the Arabic medium schools. It was established by former school inspectors and other educational professionals in 1998. It supports approximately 110 primary and secondary schools with a total student
population of 51,378 students and teaching staff of 1,384. Member schools pay a monthly membership fee of $1.50 per classroom which is used to cover the administrative cost of the network (Somalia: Path to recovery building, 2004). I visited the network’s headquarters in Mogadishu and the network staff members seemed to me as though they were working as a local education authority. It was interesting to note that the network was not acting as an NGO that exists only in Mogadishu. Rather, it was a member-driven body that can function with the approval and support of member schools. This makes it act like a local school district or authentic education authority.

SAFE

The Somali Association for Formal Education, (SAFE), is the other main educational umbrella organization currently in existence in Somalia. It was founded in 1998 to bring together most schools that use the pre-1991 Somali curriculum. I was told by the association secretary, Mr. Hussein Alasow, that there were 48 schools that are members in the association with over 25,000 students in all regions of the country, except northwestern regions, Somaliland. Member schools in this association get some technical, not financial, support from UNESCO. For example, they use primary school certificates prepared by the UN agency. There are some secondary schools that are members in this association but use different certificates and syllabi because no certificate or syllabi are in place yet and UNESCO is planning to introduce a new syllabus. For the most part, schools under this network continue to use the former Somali national curriculum and adopt English or Somali as medium of instruction (Somalia: Path to recovery building, 2004).
There is a simplistic perception that FPENS is for Arabic medium schools and SAFE for English and Somali medium schools but it is clear from the schools that I have visited that this is not always the case.

Coping With Extreme Difficulties

The total collapse – without external force – of the highly centralized state which, in spite of its inefficiency, used to provide for public services such as health and education was an unprecedented event in modern history of nation states. The state collapse and subsequence inter-clan and inter-factional civil war brought untold misery to millions of Somalis, several thousands of whom were killed in the fighting and related famine. In spite of the persistent insecurity in the country for almost two decades since the collapse of the state, the Somali society has shown a remarkable resilience in coping with the situation. The community made good use of traditional and local networks and institutions. Based on the theory of social capital, a recent study has examined the extent to which various social networks have helped the society to cope with the seemingly difficult circumstances (Colleta & Cullen, 2000).

The corrupt and repressive regimes that have ruled the country since independence and the subsequent civil war have eroded the social institutions that the society could have counted on in such crisis. Nonetheless, the crisis has taught the people to cope with it. Therefore, the society has since gone back to the old assets of social capital and utilized traditional mechanism of conflict resolution. Such social networks as clan elders and religious organizations have been extremely helpful not only in conflict management but also in providing vital development services, like education and health care. These social networks have proved particularly useful in regions where relative
peace and stability was achieved. Referring to one such region in northern Somali, Colleta & Cullen (2000) made this assessment:

Civil society, including religious organizations, and clan elders have played a significant role in mediating inter-clan conflicts and encouraging cross-cutting activities. Religious groups, which are active even where hostilities have not yet ceased, have provided health and education services and have in some instances supplied food to orphans and poor families. These groups often transcend clan and regional lines, thus helping strengthen cross-cutting social capital. (p. 63)

In the early days of the civil strife the widespread hostilities caught everyone unawares and did not give them a chance to think of education. Security concerns and food shortage were on everybody’s mind. The civil war and subsequent displacement and famine did not allow the society which was preoccupied with seemingly more urgent emergencies to think of education. However, after the worst years of the civil war were over, the community began to think about education of the children who were in danger of losing their meaningful life if left unschooled. Speaking of the society’s early realization of their role, Dr. Mohamed Hussein said:

I think when the people realized that nobody is running their business for them and no one is going to do it for them, as the Somali proverb goes, ceelna uma qodna cidna uma maqna (neither a well is dug for them nor are they waiting for someone else), they decided to set up schools. They realized that the situation was grave and that there would be no change unless they take some steps (Interview, November 2004).

The first steps parents took were helping to secure and defend educational sites from militias. Then, they started sending their children to school. At that early stage,
support by aid agencies as part of the general relief operations was extremely helpful in setting up the first schools. Soon the people started to depend on themselves and a vibrant market driven by competition and lack state restrictive regulations started to provide goods and services at a competitive price. Encouraged by the success of the private entrepreneurship, the civil society sought to replicate the success in providing social services, especially education. Thus, old schools were renovated and new ones opened, marking the beginning of private education in the country. Describing this turnaround by the civil society, a university professor said:

When it was realized that the war could take a long time the community resolved to open schools, despite the difficult conditions. There were many parents who did not send their children to school in the early years but when the crisis continued for more years and students started to finish primary education they woke up and sent their children to school. Because there was no other alternative, people strongly supported the private education (Dr. Mohamed Hussein, Interview, November 2004).

The most serious issue to deal with in such situations was insecurity in and around schools. It was not uncommon that fight would suddenly break out in the neighborhood or the vicinity of the school. This is how Dr. Mohamed Hussein narrated such eventualities:

Schools used to be opened while fighting was going on. It was common that suddenly war breaks out in this locality and because of that students could not come to school from their usual road or could not come at all. If the war intensifies, schools would be closed temporarily for security reasons (Interview, November 2004)
The society has coped with the situation to that extent. If there is a fighting in one area people would stop going there while the fighting is going on but once the fighting ceases people would go back to their business as normal. The first schools were set up under these security circumstances and teachers and parents were well aware of the situation. They just didn’t have other alternatives. Commenting on this realization of the precarious security situation in which schools had to operate, Dr. Mohamed Hussein said: “Under these circumstances, war often breaks out in the vicinity of our schools. In some schools we have to constantly give extortion money to militias controlling the area or who claim ownership of the buildings or sites we occupy.” (Interview, December 2004).

Likewise, at the time schools were being set up, the society was facing severe economic hardships, including food shortage and famine in some parts of the country. With everyone extremely concerned about daily survival, few families, if any, had the luxury of contemplating about schools. Nevertheless, the community appeared to be adjusting to the reality and doing their best to cope with it. That is how Abukar, an official of one of the education umbrella organizations, saw it: “It appears now that people have started to cope with the situation and heads of household, working or not, are paying for their children’s education. This is a good habit but difficult economically to sustain” (Interview, December 2004). A similar positive assessment was made by a teacher of a school in a town outside Mogadishu where the community is less capable of paying the cost of schooling. “The society has matured and understood the importance of education. Parents and students are selling their valuable properties to finance education. This is a new phenomenon in the country.” (Mustafa Maalim, Interview, December 2004).
It must be said, however, that like any other human endeavor, some sections of
the society are doing better in the process of coping with the situation, while others might
still be confused or looking for outside help. When I asked Abukar about this, he was
quick to acknowledge it:

We cannot say all Somalis are coping with the reality but there are many parents
who understand their responsibilities and there are many more people who are fed up
with the present difficult situation and just praying for the state to come and intervene
(Interview, December 2004).

Thus, among the community there are those who are beginning to understand the new
reality and taking the responsibility and there are those who still have the old mentality of
waiting for the state to provide education to everyone.

**Current Status: Strengths and Weaknesses**

In order to understand the current education in Somalia, we need to look at the
whole picture and take special note of the persistent security problems that educators
have had to deal with in their efforts to open schools in their communities. We also need
to consider the prevailing not-so-good socio-economic conditions in the country. The
data indicates that despite the insurmountable difficulties, some tangible results have
been achieved under the circumstances. It became apparent from the conversation I had
with educators that they are pleased with the results of their efforts. Giving his view on
the schools that have been set up since the collapse of the state, Farah Abdulqadir said:
“There emerged well-organized schools with different levels of education following the
usual system of education, taught at and run by qualified teachers and trusted and paid for
by parents (Interview, January 2005).
The first question that one would ask in this kind of situation is, perhaps, who is making the regulations for schools and other educational institutions? The simple answer to that question is: no one. However, if you look into the schools and how they operate you will realize that the issue is not that simple and that there are organizational patterns for most schools. The most important thing to note here is that the organizational patterns are not remnants of the collapsed state or institutions imported from outside. Rather, they came into existence as a result of local initiatives dictated by the necessity occasioned by the statelessness. For instance, an official of one of the two educational umbrella organizations that coordinate most of the schools said the following explaining how it started:

A need was felt to have a central administration to coordinate school operations. The establishment of the educational umbrella organization, FPENS, Formal Private Education Network in Somalia, reflected the need for a central body to coordinate matters of administration, examination, curriculum, certification and training (Ahmed Abdullahi, Interview, December 2004).

Similarly, Dr Mohamed Hussein made these remarks:

Because there is no state or ministry of education, educational institutions have been established. Educational umbrella organizations, such as FPENS, SAFE, etc, have been formed to coordinate various schools and help them in matters of regulations, certification and supervision (Interview, November 2004).

While interviewing teachers and other school leaders, I noticed a sense of pride among almost all of them of educational achievements made, against all odds. They all said that no one would have believed that this much would be achieved in a country
which has been in a state of civil war continuously for 16 long years. Although they were unanimous in their pride of the achievements, in general, every one cited different achievements that they think were important and their views were also divergent on what factors might have contributed to the success. For example, a teacher said this in this regard: “One of the factors that contributed to the success of the education is the parents who understood that their children need education and paid for it, despite the difficult economic conditions in the country today” (Mukhtar Gedi, Interview, December 2004).

Elsewhere in this study, I discussed parental and community contributions to the successes in education but we have not seen students’ contribution so far. Few people would credit students for the achievements made. However, Abdulmajid Hassan, a secondary school principal, maintained that students’ contribution is not less, if not greater, than that of other sections of the community. He believes that due to the concerted efforts by educators and parents, students’ attitude towards education has changed. Whereas, in the past they used to hate schools, today they attend schools on their own free will, without having any one to force them to come to school. Reiterating this point, he said:

I can say the biggest achievement is the obvious desire of the students to learn. Whereas in the past it used to be compulsory to go to school and still students used to drop out of school, because they did not have the will to learn, today they come to school voluntarily and pay their fees. A general willingness to go to school on the part of students as well as parents has been created. I believe helping create this desire to learn is the biggest achievement in education today (Interview, November 2004).
As we have seen elsewhere in the study, the current education in Somalia was started from scratch and it is not a continuation of the old one, because the old education system was destroyed along with the collapsed state. Thus, today’s education is bound to be different from the former one in many respects. This difference is nowhere more pronounced than in curriculum contents. In changing the curriculum, anything that is remotely associated with the old system has been thrown out of the window. In its place, a variety of curricula have been adopted in various schools, as we have seen earlier. It is understandably clear that the teachers and other educational leaders who are part of this process of curriculum change feel that the change is for the better. That is why Abdulmajid Hassan views the curriculum change that has occurred as an important achievement to be proud of when he said:

Another achievement is that the content of education that students acquire in school today is compatible with the culture and conscience of the society. This is in sharp contrast with education during the collapsed regime which used to force alien ideologies, such as socialism and “revolutions” on the students in school (Interview, November 2004).

In the absence of the state, the educational umbrella organizations are not only coordinating various schools in the country and regulating their operations but have begun to enter into international agreements with foreign educational institutions on behalf of the nation’s school. For example, the umbrella organizations have negotiated with foreign universities and secured scholarships for Somali students who have completed their secondary education in Somalia to go and study abroad. This arrangement proved to be very useful in encouraging students to excel in school, because
the scholarships are competitive. As a result, many Somali students have gone to various foreign universities mostly in Arabic speaking countries. Speaking on this process and its usefulness, Dr. Mohamed Hussein said:

Top students in every school are given scholarship to study in overseas universities. This makes students to work hard in their studies. I can say with confidence that the quality of education is higher today than during the time of the state (Interview, November 2004).

Along the way, it was also felt that foreign universities cannot absorb all students and therefore there must be local institutions of higher education put in place. Giving the reasons behind the establishment of one of the local universities, Dr. Mohamed Hussein, a professor in the university, had this to say: “There was also the credibility problem of the certificates when taken to foreign institutions. Thus, a need was felt for local institutions of higher learning. This is how the idea of Mogadishu University came into existence” (Interview, November 2004).

However, I must say that the picture is not all that rosy and there is a myriad of problems, ranging from insecurity, economic hardship, lack of regulations, and lack of unified curriculum or curriculum guides. Talking about the economic hardship, this is how Abukar described the present situation:

There is also a general economic hardship in the country. Families are struggling to make ends meet. Therefore, paying school fees is the last thing on their priority list and schools were struggling too, because school fees are a major source of income for financing education (Interview, December, 2004).
It is an unfortunate reality that many students cannot go to school, because their families cannot afford to pay the minimal school fees. Students would like to go to school but schools cannot admit them. Some people who can afford do pay school fees but the vast majority cannot afford due to these difficulties. “Sometimes, we request Somali businesspeople here in Somalia or Somalis in the Diaspora to help pay the school fees of some students.” (Dr. Mohamed Hussein, Interview, November 2004).

Perhaps the most serious and persistent problems that I would say impede the development of education are insecurity and instability. Security is a prerequisite for educational institutions to thrive. Making this point, a teacher said: “if there is no security, there would be no education. Schooling occurs on certain times and there will be no education if students cannot attend their school on time due to security problems” (Mukhtar Gedi, Interview, December 2004). It is obvious that anything that educational institutions would want to do would be impeded by insecurity. For instance, Dr. Mohamed Hussein gives this example of the difficulties schools face under the circumstances: “If you want to equip a school with laboratories and bring equipment, you cannot do. Armed militia could demand that your school pay them extortion money or employ some of them to be security guards.” (Interview, November 2004).

The general security environment is just not conducive to learning. That is why the achievements are made against all odds and despite the difficulties and teachers and school leaders realize this fact. Acknowledging this, Abdulmajid Hassan had this to say:

One of the factors that hinder education is that the general social environment in which we live today does not help people to learn. Only exceptional people get education
in this environment, because when they get home students hear stories about fighting among clans (Interview, November 2004).

This lawlessness and free-for-all situation is also unfortunately tempting to many people, especially young boys, to engage in destructive behaviors, such looting, killing and joining armed militias, as Abdulmajid Hassan put it: “A student might see militiamen who quickly got richer by robbing people at the roadblock and think that they too should leave school and join them” (Interview, November 2004). Students are likely to be saved from this kind of behavior once they are in school but it is a challenging task to convince them to come on board in the first place.

Another problem is the lack of professional development for teachers who have not had any teacher training courses since the collapse of the state. Typically, schools employ teachers who graduated from the former Lafoole College of Education before the civil war. These teachers have not had any refresher courses in teacher training ever since and their number is dwindling, because the college is no longer in existence. New teachers mainly come from overseas universities and quite a few have been trained by local universities. Some aid agencies involved in supporting education have also trained some teachers. Talking about these efforts in training teachers, the dean of the faculty of education of Mogadishu University, Dr. Mohamed Hussein, said:

Mogadishu University tried to organize training courses for teachers but it can only cover a small part of the need. Some Western agencies do sometimes organize refresher courses for some teachers but the need for professional development of teachers is greater than that and it requires a state intervention (Interview, November 2004).
Another significant shortcoming is that generally schools lack equipment, such as teaching aids and laboratories they need to give students an ideal learning environment and to be able to teach effectively. Most schools operate in rented premises that were not originally designed to be schools and often the space is not enough for students and staff. Explaining this problem, Dr. Mohamed Hussein said: “school premises today are mostly buildings that were not originally meant to be schools. Schools are in rented houses, hotels or similar sites, while school buildings are occupied by displaced people who need to be relocated from there” (Interview, November 2004). That is precisely the reason why many schools “operate on double shift basis and students come either in the morning or in the afternoon shifts” (Abdirahman Sheikh, Interview, December 2004). Similarly, due to the insecurity and the general economic hardship in the country, schools have no science laboratories or computer labs with the exception of few schools.

The overall assessment of the current condition by educators is optimistic in tone, despite acknowledgement of many problems that need to be tackled in order to have an ideal education in the country. Seen in the context of the current security and socio-economic environment, today’s achievements are significant. The achievements obviously make the people involved in the process optimistic and proud of the successes made so far. This optimistic feeling was clear from the talk of almost all the teachers and school leaders I had a chance to talk to. They said they believed that education in Somalia today was better than ever before and despite the many problems and difficult security, economic and social conditions under which schooling is taking place, education was in good shape, especially considering how the society is interested in it. For example, a
school principle confidently told me that today’s schools were superior to those before the state collapsed. He expressed his optimism when he said:

The fact that this huge number of students is going to school while the country is in a state civil war is in itself a big achievement. I am very optimistic about the future of education in Somalia. I think it would be bright and the desire of the people to support it is very strong but what is needed is an educated cadre and educators who would guide the public desire into a good direction (Abdulmajid Hassan, Interview, November 2004).

Similar sentiments are expressed by Abdirahman Sheikh, another school principal, who attributes the success to the prevailing private education which, unlike state-run schools, gives students quality instruction. Making this point, he had this to say:

We can say for sure that education today is qualitatively better than ever before, especially here in Mogadishu where many children go to school every morning. Since education is not free quality of education is stronger today, because teachers are accountable for their performance, whereas they were not answerable during the time of the state (Interview, December 2004).

Among the general optimism, though, there are voices of concern for the unknown and unpredictable future facing the country. Even if we take the upbeat assessment of many people of the current situation on face value, we would not fail to realize that there are those who give a bleak assessment of the future and think that the current situation is not sustainable. For example, Mukhtar Gedi believes that if this situation of no state and no security continues people’s hope would diminish and those dedicated educators who have been tirelessly working would despair and say the situation is hopeless. He said:
I believe that the society can only go on like this for so long and there would be a limit to people’s patience and ability to cope. If the current situation continues and problems, such as unemployment and insecurity, prolong and no solution is found, I think there would be little hope. Education service providers would get fatigued and parents would run out of patience and stop resisting social pressures (Interview, December 2004). However, he expects the situation to change for the better. That is the hope that keeps him going. He said: “I expect that within the next two years there will be a social understanding and communal tolerance” (Interview, December 2004).

2. Main Actors and Coping Mechanism

Teachers’ Role in Reviving Schools

Traditionally teachers are trained to teach and provide training to students in such crucial and basic skills as reading, writing and arithmetic and necessary logical and analytical thinking (Burgett, 1970). However, teachers’ role in providing education in any school setting is not confined to giving instruction in the classroom. They affect the lives of their students at home and on the street. Ideally, they should take an active part in school administration. Teachers’ participation in decision making is crucial in problem solving and conflict resolution, in addition to classroom management. Teachers are also needed to make a greater contribution to school improvement and reform. They are increasingly being called upon by life circumstances and the community to assume important leadership responsibilities, (Johnson & Boles 1994, Frost, Durrant, Head & Holden 2000). It is clear that some teachers are more dynamic than others and “dynamic teachers are not satisfied with the status quo; they help shape the worlds they work in.”, (Rallis et al. 1995, p. 119).
In heavily centralized societies, however, their role is severely limited and confined to teaching activities. The state normally assigns them clearly defined duties and would not allow them to venture out of their prescribed line of duty. Education in Somalia prior to the state collapse was tightly controlled and teachers did not have any saying in school administration. Speaking on how this orientation affected teachers’ approach to their jobs, a school administrator made the following remarks:

During this period, everybody was waiting for someone else to take the responsibility and do the job for them. They were ready to do any job that was given to them, because they were used to a centralized system where the state controls all public services, including education. There were no private institutions, organizations or NGOs that work in the private sector and everything was centralized. We were all teachers who were trained to wait for instructions to go to some places, clean up and open the schools and enroll students. It took us a whole year to start thinking about what should be done (Ahmed Abdullahi, Interview December 2004).

However, today’s situation is totally different and teachers’ role grew in importance. Following the collapse of the state, the responsibility of setting up and managing schools fell on private individuals. Most of those individuals who assumed the responsibility and had the skills and training to discharge it were teachers. Thus, many schools were re-opened or started by teachers, either individually or in groups. Typically, during early years of the civil war when the first schools were set up, there were no school buildings that can be used. Many schools have been destroyed or rendered unsuitable for use and many more were occupied and turned into communal dwellings by internally displaced people. Even if one wanted to renovate and use one of the destroyed
public school buildings armed militias would invariably move in and demand extortion money on the pretext that they have been guarding the building or they have captured it from another militia group. In many instances, educators would have to pay hefty sums of money to the militias in order to take the possession of the building. In one such school, I was told that a group of teachers had to come together and pull their meager resources together to get the school site. They cleared the site, renovated it and established a school on the spot. On the history of this school, the principal, Abdirahman Sheikh, said: “This site was a refugee camp for internally-displaced people (IDP). After coming together, those teachers thought about what to do with this site. They suggested pulling their resources together, clearing the site, renovating it and establishing a school here” (Interview, December 2004).

Most of the teachers who set up schools were former employees in the Ministry of Education before the state collapse. Unlike other former government employees teachers and other education professionals have understood their responsibilities and rose to the task at the time of need. Realizing the magnitude of the problem and the readiness of the community for education, former teachers and education professionals embarked on efforts to rehabilitate old schools and open schools there, because to build new schools would have been costly. In other instances, schools were set up in rented private houses that have not been designed for school. Asked who initiated the first schools, teachers or the community?, Mukhtar Geedi, a teacher himself, said: “I believe that the idea came because the Somali society felt the need for education and Somali educators realized that the problem would affect the whole of Somalia” (Interview 2004). Similarly, according to
Ahmed Abdullahi, a head of a major organization involved in education, teachers had the initiative. He said:

The first step was taken by educational professionals, because without their first step nothing would have started. The second step was that of the parents who send their children to school and paid for the school fees. The third factor was the diminishing hope of reestablishing the state (Interview, December 2004).

It must be said, however, that teachers were very much affected by the civil war, like all sections of the society. Many of them fled the country for obvious security reasons. That is why schools had to close. Some these never returned but others have returned and it is these returnees and those teachers who never left that started the first schools. Narrating this piece of history from teachers’ perspective, Mohamed Tohow had this to say:

At the beginning of the current crisis, many Somali teachers have walked out of their schools and fled to safety when the state that used to employ them had collapsed. They have now come back to their profession and education is one of few professions that employs educators and is likely to remain so even when there is a state (Focus Group Discussion, December 2004).

While their intention might have been to save the Somali children from the catastrophe of the war, teachers were at the same time looking for a decent means of earning a living at that extremely difficult time. Being unemployed and in search of jobs it was only natural that they set up schools, because teaching was obviously the job they knew best. This is how Abdirahman Sheikh put it:

The goals for which the school were established was to create jobs for unemployed Somali teachers and at the same time give those Somali children who have
been without schooling since the outbreak of the civil war a chance to education (Interview, December 2004).

The view that educational professionals are involved in schools only because there are no other alternatives for them to earn a living might seem exaggerated but it is true that there were actually few job opportunities in the country at the time. Some of the educators setting up schools have remained in the country throughout the years of the civil war or have initially fled the country and came back. Others came from overseas to contribute to the development of education in the country. These professionals established schools of all forms and shapes – a private language school, a full-fledged elementary and secondary school or universities, as Farah Abdulqadir, the head of one of the educational umbrella networks, put it: “There were many Somali graduates from local universities, as well as from abroad, who came together and made concerted efforts to establish institutions of higher learning in the country” (Interview, January 2005).

Like the rest of the society teachers too were initially displaced by the civil war and had to gradually gather their pieces. Today many have come back and are taking part in the educational reconstruction that is taking place.

**Community Participation**

Modern education is closely associated with the state in most developing nations, because not only it was part of the package of colonial legacy that was left behind by European colonial powers but also 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 did not only weaken but completely disappeared and the community had to step in and assume the responsibility. According to one of the educators, Ahmed Abdullahi, community involvement began modestly and expanded later:

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 (Interview December 2004).

It appears that the community did not realize the crisis would take this long and were hoping that the state would soon be reestablished. So, their involvement in organizing 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, Interview 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 (Interview, January 2005).

Gradually, parents and the community at large came to realize that they have 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, Interview, 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 needs of education (Mustafa Maalim, Interview 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 community which is a new concept in education in Somalia” (Ahmed Abdullahi, Interview 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 be self-sufficient in resources and management. This was exactly the view of a school principal I talked to 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, Interview November 2004).

In taking care of education in the absence of the state, 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”

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 which 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 (Interview, 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” (Interview, December 2004).

Community participation is more important today 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 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 society would support schools and teachers only if it is 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, Interview December 2004).

A related that I asked teachers and school administrators was 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, was categorical that businesspeople do not contribute in any form or shape. He said:

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 businesspeople 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 business people 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” (Interview, 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 (Interview, 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 socio-economic 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 livelihood but also in paying school fees for their children and in security, among other things. Some of the schools that I visited were established with contribution 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 (Interview, January 2005).

The importance of the Somalis in the diaspora is being felt in all sectors of the socio-economic 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 society 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 (Interview, 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 (Interview, January 2005).

This optimism is likely to grow when a large number of these diaspora communities come back home, because they will bring along 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, Interview, 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, Interview, 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.

**External Support by Aid Agencies**

Following the collapse of the state and destruction of all educational institutions in 1991, some Islamic charities and Arab aid agencies provided funds to establish some schools. Initially, this was part of the relief efforts that was underway in the country in the early 1990s and came in response to lobbying by concerned Somalis. In addition, many Somali educators set up their own schools some of which later developed into full-fledged schools serving large sections of the society. Thus, most of the current schools were set up in early 1990s when Islamic and Arab charities, in response to lobbying from Somali individuals and NGOs, provided funds to revive the public education system (Somalia: Path to recovery building, 2004).

Although relief efforts during the early days of the crisis were carried out by both Western and Islamic aid agencies, it is worth noting that Islamic NGOs, both local and International, have proven to be more effective in delivering much needed services to all parts of the country. They are particularly engaged in the education and health sectors (Raghe, 1997). This is probably because they gained community trust more than anyone else due to their religious nature. They also could take security risks and venture in areas
where other NGOs consider too dangerous. That is why they stayed and kept operating after many international NGOs left for various reasons with the departure of the UN intervention, UNOSOM, in 1995.

A recent report has identified several forms of Arab and Islamic assistance to Somali education: official government donors; International Islamic charities; Islamic or Arab multi-lateral institutions and local Somali NGOs that receive support from Arab organizations. Since there is no recognized government to receive international donations, official government assistance is primarily in the form of scholarships given to Somali students to study in Arab universities. The only noteworthy Arab multilateral donor to education in Somalia is the Islamic Development Bank which has given Somalia a priority status due to the civil war (Arab donor policies, 2004).

Somali educators I met with have all recognized the important role played by aid agencies, especially in early years of the crisis, in starting the emergency education that came to develop into the current form. They expressed gratitude for the support they received during the worst years of the crisis. I was told that the beginning was modest and the objective may not have been to establish full-fledged schools but those first steps were followed by more focused and carefully planned efforts to set up modern schools. During the worst years of the civil war and famine, aid agencies stepped in to deliver much need food supplies to the people and helped set up schools in some places, making it possible for a few people to benefit. Talking about those first steps, Ahmed Abdullahi said:

Aid agencies came to feed the people during the famine but also decided to start education. They began using feeding kitchens as classrooms. Those organizations,
whatever their countries of origin, have started the process and they also gave us the
impetus that keeps us rolling (Interview, December 2004).

Initially, many aid agencies came and set up or supported some schools. As stated
above, most of these agencies were Arab aid agencies. The first schools to be established
were either managed by charity organizations or were set up by private individuals who
come together and set up their own schools where they teach themselves. As Ahmed
Abdullahi pointed out, Somali individuals played a major role in establishing the first
school, even when the funding came from aid agencies.

It was the time of the famine and appeals were sent out for help and relief
operations began to arrive to feed hungry people. We then thought that the people needed
not only feeding but intellectual nourishment as well. Those private schools were the
easiest to reassemble (Interview, December 2004).

International aid agencies also took part in assisting schools throughout the crisis. They
came primarily for relief purposes and their attention was drawn to education by strong
lobbying from Somali educators. Many aspects of education still rely on technical and
logistic support by international aid agencies. Spelling that point out, Dr. Mohamed
Hussein said:

International aid agencies focused their efforts on relief operations to save the
people from starvation. They were later approached by educators to contribute to opening
of schools and reestablishing education in the country. They were asked to contribute to
teachers’ salaries if the community could rehabilitate school buildings or set up schools
in rented premises. Some aid agencies from Arab and Muslim countries accepted this
proposal (Interview, November 2004).
Some of the assistance provided by international aid agencies was technical in nature and the agencies did not operate their own schools, because, as it turned out, they didn’t want to get involved in running educational institutions for long. This is what Sheikh Omar meant when he said: “Some aid agencies used to organize seminars and training courses for teachers. From 1994, the food for work program was initiated by WFP to give some small assistance to teachers but this program later stopped” (Interview, December 2004). Most of these aid agencies left the country once the relief operations were stopped in the mid 1990s. That was an opportunity for educators to rise to the occasion and continue from where the agencies have left. This is exactly what happened according to one educator who was himself involved in the process from the beginning:

UNOSOM and all international forces left. As a result, the field was left only for those who were genuinely interested in working in education. Most of these people were individuals who worked previously in education, as teachers or educational leaders or managers. This was the only way open for them to earn a decent living (Farah Abdulqadir, Interview, January 2005).

In other instances, schools were set up by aid agencies who, for one reason or another, abandon them later. In this case, the local community had to take over and continue from where the aid agencies left. For example, as Abukar says below, some schools were left behind by departing UN forces from Arab countries to be managed by Somalis:

At the end of the UNOSOM program some forces from Arab countries, such as Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates that were here as part of the intervention began to establish educational projects and when they left they left those projects to Somalis to run (Interview, December 2004).
The society had no choice but to step in and manage the schools and contribute to their finances by paying school fees. This was, indeed, the case, according to Abdirahman Sheikh: “Now it seems the society has taken the responsibility and there few or no aid agencies that are active in the field of education in the country (Interview, December 2004). The problem with those first schools was that they were treated as part of the relief operations and once those relief operations scaled down, schools were also closed down as a consequence. On this unfortunate episode, Ahmed Abdullahi said:

Once UNOSOM (UN Operations in Somalia) left and schools stopped giving food to students, only few schools remained open. These were the schools where the parents were willing to pay for the education of their children. Those schools that were supported by international organizations also closed, because parents did not trust the education they offer (Interview, December 2004).

While recognizing the role of external support, some of the educators I spoke with insisted that the support was not crucial in establishing schools, whereas other maintained that without that support nothing would have been accomplished. For instance, Mukhtar Gedi is of the view that external support was not substantial in setting up schools. He said: “I don’t think that education was able to succeed because of substantial support by international or local organizations. Instead, most of the support came from the Somali society and parents.” (Interview, December 2004). In contrast, Dr. Mohamed Hussein said: “Early efforts came with the international relief operations that were carried out by the international community to save the people of Somalia” (Interview, November 2004). He maintained that external support was not only crucial in starting schools but still there even today. “The agencies, whether Western or Arab, are still there and are still involved
in education but the community has the largest role in education” (Interview, November 2004). Giving credit to the ill-fated UN intervention in Somalia during the period from 1992 to 1995 for the proliferation NGOs, some of whom were working in the education sector, Farah Abdulqadir had this to say:

Another factor that encouraged the establishment of schools was the coming of UNOSOM (UN Operations in Somalia), because the war had begun to stop and people came back to cities. Many NGOs were formed giving many people a way of earning a living. Some of these NGOs were working in the education sector. There was even a program set up in 1993-1994 by WFP (World Food Program) known as Food for Work, where teachers were given food in exchange for teaching (Interview, December 2004). The reason why people formed NGOs and set up schools during the UN intervention was because there was a resemblance of stability and a sense of law and order as the UN forces had put much of the country under control. Once there was a stability the need for education was felt immediately by all concerned. “Once the relief operations have succeeded and people felt a sense of relief, it was realized during the UN operation, UNOSOM, that the biggest destruction was in education” (Dr. Mohamed Hussein, Interview, November 2004).

One area where UN agencies have been extremely helpful is the provision of education kits which are packages of basic education materials, such as pens, pencils, chalks, notebooks, etc. This is important because many schools and parents cannot afford to make these kits available to students. In addition to revising and printing the Somali national school curriculum which is an on-going project, the provision of these kits today
is the most salient aspect of United Nations emergency education response (Eversmann, 2000).

Although many schools still receive some assistance, external support to education has certainly reduced from the level of 1990s when it was seen as part of larger humanitarian efforts. In addition to the common donor fatigue that is often cited as a reason for the reduced external aid, some educators have noted that in the post-9/11 world, it has become extremely difficult for Arab donors to freely give as they used to do before. As a consequence, local communities had to cope with the reality and assume the responsibility. That was what Ahmed Abdullahi was referring to when he said:

External support by international organizations has diminished, especially these days that donations to another nation has been stigmatized. Particularly, Arab donors who used to donate easily have been pressurized not to donate. This has gradually transferred the responsibility to the community (Interview, December 2004).

Another reason why external support is on the wane is that it is not sustainable to rely in external aid for ever. The community has to fill in one day. Some of the aid agencies were first to draw the community attention to this reality. Giving an example for this, a school principal had this to say:

Islamic aid agencies used to be very active by providing free education in Arabic and paying teachers’ salaries. Even then, they used to advise the community to own and run the schools by themselves, because continuing funding by the aid agencies is not tenable (Sheikh Omar, Interview, December 2004).

The few international NGOs that remained behind also realize that they cannot continue funding schools. Therefore, the support has now greatly reduced and the community is by
and large responsible for maintaining schools. Commenting on this realization, Abdirahman Sheikh said: “Even though it was started by aid agencies, the people have now taken the responsibility to take care of education, because aid agencies would not manage education for the society for ever” (Interview, December 2004).

Currently, there is an apprehension among some Somalis involved in education that educational projects supported by international aid agencies may cease once there is a functioning state in the country. They predict that the state will not tolerate their activities or they will just leave on their own. For instance, Farah Abdulqadir made this prediction:

Those humanitarian agencies that are involved in providing education are not likely to keep doing so when there is a state that is capable of providing educational services. They might just hand over the educational facilities to the state and concentrate on other services or leave the country (Interview January 2005).

Dr Mohamed Hussein summed up the complementary roles played by the local community and international aid agencies in education today when he said: “Education managed by both international aid agencies and local communities. It was started by international aid agencies but their involvement has now diminished. Most of the funding today comes from the community.” (Interview, November 2004).

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 count 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.
Although most aid agencies that helped establish early schools were from Arab countries, there are some Western aid agencies that remained in the country after the withdrawal of the failed US/UN intervention in 1995. These agencies contributed and continue to contribute to helping schools in many parts of the country. In most cases, Western aid agencies do not run schools of their own. Rather, they give technical support to schools that already exist. Few of these agencies do have schools of their own, as we will see in the examples below. The following are some of the Western aid agencies that still operate schools in Somalia. I was able to visit educational facilities of two of them. In addition to these, there are UN agencies and other international NGOs operating in the country.

**Concern Worldwide, Mogadishu**

I visited the main office of Concern Worldwide, a Western aid agency still operating in the country. I had a chance of interviewing the agency’s education coordinator, Mr. Mohamed Ahmed Tarabi, about their educational activities. He told me that the agency does not run its own schools. All it does is to support schools set up and managed by local communities who would initiate schools and pay about 40% of the cost and take the responsibility of running it. The agency would help with the remaining 60% of the cost in the form of technical support, such as teacher training and salary, curriculum development and materials that are not readily available locally. According to Mr Tarabi, localization of education had started during the former regime.

The agency supports some 18 schools, all primary, in Mogadishu and Lower Shabeelle Region. The agency emphasizes on community involvement approach. Schools are community-owned, instead being owned by the agency which only provides technical
support, training and textbooks. Community mobilization is the key to coping with adverse conditions, such as insecurity and civil war. The schools that are supported by the agency follow the existing Somali curriculum. The schools participate in examination system coordinated by the educational umbrella organization, Schools Association For Education, SAFE. In all these schools, Somali is used as the medium of instruction, because educators here believe that Somali-based instruction is more relevant to Somali students.

I attended the closing session of a week-long teachers training workshop organized for teachers and school administrators from different schools supported by Concern. The teachers who took part in the workshop were representatives of schools supported by the agency in Mogadishu and Lower Shabeelle Region. A good number of participants, both male and female, attended the workshop which was held during the school break and continued for several days. At the end of the workshop, participants were presented with certificates of participation and gifts consisting of books, other school supplies and sports kits e.g. ball, T-shirts, notebooks and pencils for their respective schools.

There I also interviewed four teachers, two female teachers representing a school in Hamar Jajab, a very poor neighborhood in Mogadishu where parents cannot afford to pay fees. The other two were male teachers from Banaaney Village in Kurtunwaarey District, Lower Shabeelle Region. They were very upbeat about education in the village. They were from the Maay dialect-speaking community from the Riverrine region. I was struck by their enthusiasm and articulation. The region where these teachers came from is one of the worst affected by the civil war. It is also prone to floods and similar disasters
and the community is generally poor and cannot afford to pay school fees. The fact that
they have organized schools is a promising sign of progress.

**SOS Children’s Village, Mogadishu**

This institution is totally different in many respects. First of all, it is one of very
few, if not the only, educational and social service organization of Western origin that has
been successfully operating in the country since before the civil war. It had been in
existence since early 1980s, continuously served the community throughout the years of
the civil strife. Second, it specializes in serving a particularly disadvantaged section of
the community, i.e. orphans and abandoned children. The village is a very well-designed
and spacious center that comprises of various units or homes and administrative blocks,
as well as playgrounds.

The institution is mainly supported by sponsorship from well-wishers in the West.
There are dedicated foreign volunteers, most of them devout Christian, residing in and
serving the center. The village employs Somali women who serve as matrons or mothers
for the children. Each woman is put in charge of a house where she serves a mother to a
number of children of different ages both male and female. The children are raised in
each individual house as a family and efforts are made to keep the family ties in tact with
those children and mothers who left the center.

The new director, a Somali himself, is making constant efforts to develop the
institution’s ties with the surrounding community. From its inception, the institution was
based on the idea of being a village that is intended to be part of the surrounding
community, like any other normal village. However, because of its Western origin, it has
not been successful in the past to forge the close relationship with the community as it
envisioned. Now it appears to be making progress in this direction. It even set up a Quranic school within the complex for the children. The institution’s primary school and hospital serve the larger Somali society free of charge.

3. Emerging Systems

Curriculum & Medium of Instruction

In reconstructing educational institutions in the absence of any form of state regulation, educational practitioners have achieved some tremendous successes and have encountered many difficulties in the process. One of the most often cited difficulty, in addition to insecurity, is the lack of a unified or standardized curriculum and/or pedagogical guidelines. Many people feel that despite the success and usefulness of private education some form of standardized curriculum is necessary. In today’s education, schools are quite diverse in the kind of curriculum and the language of instruction they adopt. Typically, schools adopt whatever curriculum and language of instruction they see appropriate to them, as a teacher told me: “There are different curricula in Somalia today and every school or organization adopted the curriculum that they chose or thought appropriate for their interests” (Abdirahman Sheikh, Interview December 2004). In most cases, their decision in this regard is influenced by their sources of funding, teaching resources at hand and personal familiarity of those in charge of the school. The Somali national curriculum is still in use, at least partially, in some schools. It is likely to be found in schools that receive technical support from UNICEF, UNESCO and other UN agencies involved in the development of education in Somalia. The problem with this curriculum is that it is almost nonexistent in a document form, because there is no state that formulates it. Generally, people are quick to note that there is no
unified curriculum in Somalia and therefore, schools use a collection of curricula. This is how a teacher described the situation to me:

The curriculum that has been developed by the Islamic Development Bank is just an Arabized version of the old curriculum translated into Arabic with some modifications. There are different curricula adopted from various Arab countries in use in different schools. That is the general problem today. UNESCO is in the process of developing a new curriculum. They have completed up to the 6th grade only and the textbooks have been distributed (Mustafa Maalim, Interview December 2004).

Examples of foreign-origin syllabi currently in use in various schools in the country include those from Kenya, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Yemen and United Arab Emirates. The Kenyan curriculum is very popular with some English medium schools, probably because its curriculum materials are readily available and is thought to be strong compared to other neighboring countries. The curricula from Arab countries are popular with many Arabic medium schools all over the country. This is because these schools have been set up with the support of aid agencies or charities from Arab countries. However, because the support is only partial and curriculum materials are not sufficiently supplied to them, schools in most cases take pieces of curriculum components from different sources and use them with some adaptations, as needed. The educational networks, especially FPENS, have tried to harmonize these curricula as far as course contents are concerned but syllabi and textbooks remain widely different. Echoing this fact Farah Abdulqadir had this to say:

There are different curricula as far as textbooks are concerned. Right now, we are at a stage whereby in Arabic medium secondary schools, chapters and concepts are taken
from textbooks from various Arab countries and make them a book to be used in classroom teaching for different subjects (Interview, January 2005).

It is worth noting here that curricula from Ethiopia and Djibouti, the other two neighboring countries, and Western countries with a large number of Somali Diaspora, such as the US and Western Europe, are conspicuously missing from this mixture of curriculum collection. It is probably the case that historically Somalis have some misgivings about Ethiopia and, though culturally very close, there is little Djibouti could offer in this regard for lack of resources. The absence of curricula from Western countries could be attributed to the lack of involvement of Western governmental and non-governmental organizations in education in Somalia.

Coming from a background of a centralized state with a unified curriculum, most Somalis are quick to note the present-day differences in school curricula but not every one is calling for a unified curriculum. Many people clearly view the present situation as chaotic and untenable and would like to see an end to it. They would prefer the state to intervene and develop school curriculum. Others see the phenomenon healthy and express fear of going back to the central state’s control of education. In principle, the old Somali curriculum is still there but it is not being developed by a national authority. It is mostly used today by schools supported by UN agencies.

There are many schools in Somalia today with no unified curriculum or central body of administration. Various schools and organizations use different curricula. The differences in curricula are invariably attributed to the lack of state authority, because since the old system was destroyed and no other complete curriculum was readily available, every one adopted anything that they could find. Thus, according to many, there is a need for a
national Somali curriculum. Asked if there should be a state intervention in school
curriculum, a teacher said: “The most pressing need that we feel to be tackled right now
is the issue of developing a curriculum that caters for Somali students” (Mukhtar Gedi,
Interview December 2004).

The patchwork of curricula that have been adopted from different countries has to make sense in the Somali context for it to be successful. That is a daunting task facing Somali educators at this time. In some instances, the foreign curriculum is adapted to the make it compatible with the local culture. That is what happened to the Kenyan curriculum that has been adopted in many English medium schools: “We adopted a Kenyan syllabus which we adapted to make it indigenized and suitable to the Somali local culture and thus become acceptable to the students and the general society” (Abukar, Interview December 2004). In other instances, educators feel that the foreign curriculum they adopted is basically compatible with the Somali culture, because of shared Islamic culture. “The general underlying philosophy of the curricula that have been adopted from Arab countries, despite being based on their environment, is compatible with the cultural and religious beliefs of the Somali people (Abukar, Interview December 2004).

Because a lot has changed, politically and socially, since the collapse of the state, even the old Somali national curriculum needs to be adapted for it to make sense in the present-day situation. First, any reference to the old regime would not be acceptable to today’s educators, parents and students. Second, any reference to the socialist ideology followed by the collapsed state will have to be removed. Third, going with the more pronounced Islamic outlook of the society, the new curriculum has to reflect that
character. Fourth, simply because it has been two decades since the old curriculum was last modified, many outdated ideas have to be scrapped. Talking about this process, an educator had this to say:

We tried to adopt the authentic Somali curriculum which was developed by Somali educators. We adopted from this curriculum the most important parts, leaving out the outdated parts, such as those that deal with the socialist revolution and whatever was peculiar to the former regime. We modified what we have adopted and compared it with modern curricula (Mukhtar Gedi Interview, December 2004).

There are, however, educators who believe that diversity in curriculum in today’s education is both necessary and good for the country. For instance, a school principal said:

I believe different curricula are good for education and it is essentially impossible to implement one curriculum across all schools and all classrooms. All that should be there is that the state should set curriculum guidelines and standards that everybody should follow (Muudey, Focus Group Discussion, December 2004).

Another educator was of the view that although it is true that there are differences in medium of instruction, there few actual differences in curriculum in today’s schools. Dismissing the criticism of different curricula used in schools, he said: “Most of the talk about differences in curriculum is actually ill-informed. Differences in medium of instruction do not amount to difference in curriculum. Again, curriculum is dynamic and evolves with the changing socio-political changes.” (Ahmed Abdullahi, Focus Group Discussion, December 2004)
Many educators I talked to have expressed their wish that school curriculum would not just be a wholesale importation of foreign cultures but would reflect the religious and cultural worldview of the Somali society. This view is in line with today’s realities on the ground, considering that all schools are privately run and financed through school fees. Therefore, they will have to please the society, especially parents. Articulating this view, a principal said:

I believe the Somali education and school curriculum should be based on the society’s cultural foundations and should not change with the every change of the political system. Parents are particularly eager to have their children get a carefully controlled education in which moral upbringing is part of the curriculum and religious instruction is given (Abdulmajid Hassan, Interview November 2004). Thus, it is very important that parents are convinced that their children are not only getting the kind of skills they like but also they are being educated in a way that conforms to their ethical expectations. There is a feeling that the educational curriculum of the successive Somali governments was based on foreign ideology and ignored the cultural and religious heritage of the society. Specifically though, some educators are voicing their concern about the introduction of socially sensitive ideas, such as sex education, into the Somali school curriculum. For instance, a school administrator had this to say:

I caution strongly against engaging in sensitive issues, such as insulting the religious feelings of the people. What is appropriate for Kenya or Ethiopia is not appropriate for Somalia. There are issues that Western people do not understand about the Somali society. For example, they should avoid saying that schools should introduce
sex education, because it is not appropriate for our children (Abdulmajid Hassan, Interview November 2004).

When I probed him further, the administrator told me that he was not actually opposed to the introduction of such issues to schools *per se* but they way they are introduced. He said: “These and similar issues are sensitive with the society and should not be imposed from outside. However, they can be introduced in the curriculum in a way that would not contradict the culture and religion of the society” (Abdulmajid Hassan, Interview November 2004).

Related to the issue of lack of standardized curriculum is a similar lack of official language of instruction in schools. Most of the current schools were set up in early 1990s when Islamic and Arab charities, in response to lobbying from Somali NGOs, provided funds to revive the public education system (Somalia: Path to recovery building, 2004). Because resources and curriculum materials came from Arabic countries, the schools that have been established with funding from such charities adopted Arabic as the medium of instruction. This, perhaps, explains why most schools in Mogadishu have adopted Arabic as the medium of instruction. There are also a growing number of schools that have adopted English as their medium of instruction, reflecting the dominant status of English in the world today. As an example, a principal said: “The language of instruction is English for all subjects, except the Islamic Religious Education, Arabic and the Somali Language and Literature” (Abdirahman Sheikh, Interview December 2004).

However, to my surprise, support for Somali as a medium of instruction in schools is extremely weak, especially in the Mogadishu area where most schools are to be found. For example, this is how an educator sees the future of Somali in education:
I believe that Somali will not be used as a medium of instruction in near future. It will be taught as a language and literature since the people speak the language. Those schools that adopt Somali as a medium of instruction will not be popular (Abdulmajid Hassan, Interview November 2004).

Similarly, Italian, a former colonial language, is almost out of the picture. “Italian is completely forgotten and it has no impact in the field at all” (Abdulmajid Hassan, Interview November 2004). A university professor summed up the importance given to various languages by saying: “Arabic is the number 1 medium followed by English and Somali. There is no future for Italian in Somalia” (Dr. Mohamed Hussein, Interview November 2004). The language situation as it obtains today did not come as a result of a conscious planning. Rather, it was dictated by the need of the hour and often there were no resources to support it. As a teacher pointed out some teachers did not even have training in the language they had to teach in:

There are four schools in this town, including our own, using Arabic as the medium of instruction. All other schools use Somali as the medium of instruction. Teachers were not originally trained in Arabic but have just learned it to be able to function in the new system (Mustafa Maalim, Interview December 2004).

Many teachers and school administrators try hard to make the case for Arabic as the most appropriate medium of instruction in Somalia today. For example, a teacher said: “Arabic would make a better medium of instruction in the Somali community, because parents like their children to study in Arabic” (Sharif Ali, Interview December 2004). Arabic may in fact be the most popular medium of instruction at the moment. A school principal estimated the number of schools using Arabic as a medium of instruction
in the Mogadishu area to be about 85%. He went on to say: “Even the people’s culture is becoming Arabic. For example, Al-Jazeera TV is watched by all Somalis with no need of translation. So the future of Arabic is bright in Somalia” (Abdulmajid Hassan, Interview November 2004). Although English is also well-sought after these days, Arabic is more widely accessible due to the cultural and religious ties of the Somali people with the Arab speaking world. One would not fail to notice the increasing number of Somalis who can easily communicate in Arabic.

However, as pointed out elsewhere in this study, there are schools that still use Somali as medium of instruction. The schools that use Somali tend to be those schools that follow the old Somali national school curriculum and participate in examination system coordinated by the educational umbrella organization, Schools Association For Education, SAFE. As Ahmed Tarabi of Concern Worldwide told me, there are still educators who believe that Somali-based instruction is more relevant to the cognitive development of Somali students (Personal Communication, December 2004).

As indicated elsewhere in this study, it appears that the problem of language policy will resurface again once stability is restored and a fierce debate, similar to the one that raged before and after independence, on the issue is likely to ensue.

**Islamic Education**

Traditionally, Islamic education in Somalia was carried out in the centuries-old *dugsi* schools where small children learn how to write and read the *Quran*. This school system has resisted all attempts at changing it or modernizing it but it also proved to be more resilient and able to cope with adverse situations. Its strength lies in a firmly rooted community support for it. The strong community support for *dugsi* schools stems from
their religious conviction to raise their children according to the Islamic upbringing. This support, which is not normally extended to modern schools, is likely to continue, due to the same reasons and because the Quranic schools play the role of early childhood education. Reiterating this attitude on the part of the community, Mukhtar Gedi had this to say:

Somalis have strong religious traditions. That is why they send their children to Islamic dugsi schools without seeking help from any one. The situation still remains the same and Islamic education is given top priority by Somali parents. They believe that before taking them to the school students must first be taken to the traditional dugsi school. Even we teachers of schools evaluate new students’ prior exposure to Islamic school and knowledge of the Quran as part of the admission test (Interview, December 2004).

Unlike many Muslim societies around the world, Somalia has no tradition of modern Islamic schools or madrassas – aside from dugsi Quranic schools – that offer only religious education. Instead, after learning to write and read the whole or parts of the Quran in the dugsi school, Somali children usually go to modern schools where Islamic education is only one of many subjects in the curriculum. Religious scholarship is handled in mosques which serve as local madrassas like in any other Muslim society (Makdisi 1981, Bray 2003).

Dugsi schools and modern schools existed side by side ever since the latter was introduced by the colonial rule. They played supplementary roles to each other in the sense that children would go to both thereby getting the Quranic instruction and modern schooling without contradiction. Typically, children would be taken to the Islamic
schools to get exposure to the Islamic education and learn how to read and write the 
*Quran* and then they would be taken, afterwards or concurrently, to the modern school. In 
this sense, the Islamic schools did not contradict modern schools. Rather, they performed 
the functions of pre-schools. Elaborating on this point clear, a school administrator said:

Islamic schools represent the pre-school stage in the education system. Instead of 
kindergartens, which are not very common in the country, Somali parents take their 
children to Islamic *dugi* schools before taking them to school. So, Islamic schooling in 
Somalia is the equivalence of early childhood education in terms of age and curriculum 
contents (Ahmed Abdullahi, Interview, December 2004).

This arrangement means that the Islamic education and the modern education can 
co-exist. Ideally, children can attend both types of schooling. In fact, one teacher with 
many years of teaching experience told me, it had been the normal practice in schools to 
test new students in *Quran* before admitting them to schools.

The *Quranic dugsi* schools and modern education support one another. For 
example, previously before admitting to schools some schools used to test new students 
in their exposure to the *Quran* and any student who did not complete the last part of the 
*Quran* was not enrolled in school (Sharif Ali, Interview, December 2004).

Because of their perceived Christian connection, the Somali society was 
suspicious about modern schools when they were first introduced and saw their as the 
responsibility of the state and not the community. Giving this historical perspective, an 
educator said:

The involvement of the state in education only came when colonialism came to 
the country. Christian missionaries who came with the colonialism began opening
schools. The society then connected missionary-run schools with Christianity. In order to avoid their children being turned into Christians, Somali parents would not support these schools and would not send their children there (Ahmed Abdullahi, Interview, December 2004).

In this context, it must be noted that religious education is part and parcel of all schools, not just the *dugi* Quranic schools.

**Private Schools**

Private ownership of schools was nonexistent in Somalia before the collapse of the state which monopolized all means of economic production and social service institutions such as schools and hospitals. This has been the case since 1970s when the state nationalized all schools and other public service institutions. There were no private institutions, organizations or NGOs that work in the private sector and everything was centralized, as Ahmed Abdullahi put it: “state ownership of education started during the Revolution. This eliminated private ownership of educational institutions, whether by individuals or organizations” (Interview, December 2004).

The emergence of private schools followed the state collapse and all education infrastructures were destroyed. Then, there was no alternative to private school. In fact, everything, including security and provision of law and order, became private. Speaking on how the schools were inspired by the success of business enterprises, Abdirahman Sheikh said:

As there are private business enterprises, private telecommunication and hospitals, education too has become just one of the private sectors that have emerged
following the collapse of the state to provide those services that were previously provided
by the state (Interview, December 2004).
There have been some successes in business enterprises, such as telecommunication and
general trade, which contributed to creating confidence in the community. “People said
since we could succeed in these other enterprises we can also succeed in establishing
quality education” (Dr. Mohamed Hussein, Interview, November 2004). Thus, there was
a public confidence in the private education in the absence of state support. So, people’s
confidence and freedom have played a critical role in the process, as Dr. Mohamed
Hussein put it: “Now that the state that used to centralize everything is no longer there,
the people have become very confident to achieve what they want”. (Interview,
November 2004).

Perhaps the most important basis on which private education relies in its existence
in Somalia today is its community support. Therefore, private schools are likely to
continue to thrive so long as they have community support. This continued community
support would make private education sustainable even if and when there is a state in the
country. Speaking on the rationale of the community support for private schools,
Abdirahman Sheikh said: “People care about and protect their private property which
would make it more sustainable but Somalis don’t care about any commonly owned
property” (Interview, December 2004). The observation that the community protects and
cares more about privately-owned property is a valid but not sufficient reason why
private education exists. Advancing more convincing reasons for the community support
for private education, Abdulmajid Hassan had this to say:
The first factor is, of course, the conviction of the people of the benefits of education, because in this private atmosphere one has to acquire knowledge and skills to be able to function and earn a living. Another factor is that because they have to finance their education with nowhere to look for support, people are eager to learn (Interview, November 2004).

With the exception of few schools that get support from aid agencies, present-day schools are mostly private, especially in major urban centers. “Education has increasingly become private enterprise, whereas earlier the state was expected to provide everything” (Farah Abdulqadir, Interview, January 2005. On the situation in Mogadishu, in particular, Abdirahman Sheikh said: “Modern schools in Mogadishu are all privately owned, except few schools supported by some aid agencies. The two types of education are separately run” (Interview, December 2004). It must be noted here that most people in rural areas and many in urban areas cannot afford to pay the school fees of private schools and, therefore, the access is severely limited.

The future prospects of the current private schools are sometimes questioned with regard to the fluid political situation in the country. Many educators who run private schools are confident that private education is there to stay, regardless of whether is a state or not. For example, a principal of one of the private schools, Abdirahman Sheikh, expressed optimism that private education would continue to thrive. He said: “I am really optimistic and can foresee a very bright future when everything becomes private (Interview, December 2004). Farah Abdulqadir, a senior figure in one of the educational umbrella organizations, expressed similar views and predicted that even if it has to coexist with state supported public education, private education would be stronger.
There is no doubt that many people and many private schools will still operate the way they are today even after the coming of the state. Even when the state comes private education will still be stronger than the state-run education and this trend is getting stronger and stronger (Interview, January 2005).

The consensus among this group of educators seems to be that the future political outlook indicates that there will be a strong private education. However, I noticed that although educators I talked to are eagerly awaiting for a central state to be established again in the country, they are slightly apprehensive of its possible impacts on private education. The uneasiness comes not so much because the state will take over all schools or intervene in private education but it might introduce a culture of free education which is music to the ears of the public. The Somali society was used to free education throughout their state history. Farah Abdulqadir expressed this apprehension when he said: “When free education culture comes, it will have a negative impact on the private education that has now become established” (Interview, January 2005). He acknowledged that as a result of the free education that might be introduced by the state, some students might desert private schools but was quick to point out that private education would still do well, because some people would still support it: “I have no doubt that the remaining students will develop increased conscience and respect for private education and pay a higher school fees than they do today” (Interview, January 2005)

Similar sentiments were expressed by Dr. Mohamed Hussein, who also said that any sustained success would be contingent on improved security. “The private schools which are managed privately will continue, would further develop and there would be a
competition among themselves and when there is security schools would bring laboratories and equipment” (Interview, November, 2004).

Private schools are financed with the fees paid by students and parents. This phenomenon represented a change in institution as well as in attitude, because Somalia did not have a culture of paying school fees prior to the collapse of the state which used to provide free education. All of a sudden, the society had to make a transition from free education to private education that they have to pay for. Contrasting the two extremes of the dichotomy, Ahmed Abdullahi said: “The Somali society were used to a system where education was 100% free. When that system collapsed, the education that replaced the old one required them to pay 100% of the cost” (Interview, December 2004).

The change from one system to the other was not gradual. Rather, it was abrupt and quite painful to all involved and the transition from the free education to the private system was not easy. It came about as a result of facing the harsh reality of statelessness. On some occasions, aid agencies introduced the transition in a gradual manner, because they had the resources to do so. Others, especially schools that have been set up by individual teachers, had no such luxury and had to charge school fees from the beginning. One such aid agency that experimented gradual introduction of school fees is Africa Muslim Agency, which still operates many schools in Mogadishu and some other regions. Narrating how this gradual process was affected in early days of the crisis, Abdulmajid Hassan had this to say:

When African Muslims Agency began setting up primary schools, no student showed up and in an effort to attract students to the schools, food items, such as powdered milk and cooking oil, were regularly given to those families that send their
children to school. Once they became used to the habit of schooling the food was stopped from them and once they liked the idea of schooling they were told to pay school fees. Today, every student is paying US $10 a month, because they want to get education (Interview, November 2004)

Today though, school administrators proudly say that the culture of school has taken root in the society and the system is firmly in place. “The Somali people have learned to pay school fees and are ready to support schools whatever the cost.” (Abdulmajid Hassan, Interview, November 2004).

4. Role of Education in Societal Rehabilitation

The role that schools could play in mitigating the effects of violence is widely recognized by scholars and educators alike. This might run contrary to the perception that schools in a time of violence would only put students in harm’s way. Dispelling this misperception, Garbarino et al. (1992) made this comment:

Contrary to the pessimism that continues to shroud the role of the school in ameliorating outcomes for disadvantaged children, our work in the field and our review of the literature suggest that a renewed understanding of the role of the school as a caregiving environment is critical. Not only are schools one of the most continuous institutions in children’s lives … but “after the family, schools represent the most important developmental unit in modern social systems” (p. 121).

Education has an important role to play in the reconstruction and integration of the society, because children from different regions or clans come together to the school and become friends. They in turn take their friendship to their homes. In this way, whole families and localities are connected and attracted to one another and love, instead of
hatred, is thus created. Whereas various clans might be engaged in fighting with one another in one part of the country, children from all the clans go to the same schools. That would be the first step in ending the fighting and, if a sufficient number of people become involved, would bring about a lasting solution to the crisis. That is what the head of a boarding school meant when he said: “Children from all corners of the country have been brought to us and we keep them here. This is an indication that education has created integration and trust among the community.” (Abdirahman Sheikh, Interview 2004). The rehabilitation effects of education are clearly visible on the thousands of young children who, instead of joining armed militias, are going to school. This fact is realized well by all stakeholders today; teachers, parents and even students themselves. When I asked whether parents appreciate this fact, a secondary school principal said:

Some parents when called to the school to be told about their children’s behavior would tell you: please keep them in school even if they don’t learn anything, because if they are suspended they would end up in the street with other armed robbers (Abdulmajid Hassan, Interview 2004).

This is an indication of how schools contribute to the general security. It also means that students, teachers and other school staff would not take part in the civil war, whether at home or in school. These thousands of students have been saved from the civil war by going to school.

Today there are young people who were once members of armed militias and changed totally either by themselves or by parental advice, went to school and graduated and now working and have families. As an example for that, a school principal cited that “some of the students in this school carried guns yesterday. They put down the guns,
came to the school and realized the value of education” (Abdulmajid Hassan, Interview 2004). Another educator expressed similar sentiments and had this to say:

I believe that if developed properly education would contribute to the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the society. Most of the students of the secondary schools would have been busy today in street gangsters’ life and fighting if they didn’t get chances to go to school (Mukhtar Gedi, Interview 2004).

This in itself is a cause that is good enough and worth pursuing. It is the hope of all concerned that when the number of young people being pulled out of street and militia life to school reaches a critical mass, the crisis would be averted and the nation would be on its way to recovery.

The prevailing view of educators is that having tasted the peaceful life of school environment, today’s students would only want to proceed further in their education and lead a constructive life in their society. “I have noticed that once educated the individuals become conscious of the country’s interest and would want to do something useful to ease the suffering of the people” (Dr. Mohamed Hussein, Interview November 2005).

Some of the educators went further and drew connection between the crisis in Somalia and lack of education of those who are responsible for the civil war destruction. I found that point very illuminating in the sense that education positively correlates with good behavior because the lack of it was the cause of the disaster that befell on the nation. This understanding is positive and is likely to lead to the next logical consequence which is to put more efforts on how to educate the younger generation so that the current crisis would be solved and also a similar one in future would be averted. Making this link between lack of education and the civil war clear, a teacher said:
The fact is that the mayhem that happened to Somalia was due to ignorance and most of those who took part in acts of destruction are people from the countryside with no education. Some of the militia leaders who led armed factions to the civil war have shown opposition to education and warned their militiamen against allowing educated people to take leadership positions in the country (Sheikh Omar, Interview December 2004).

This is an indication that despite the persistent chaos, there is a growing realization by educators, in particular, of a correlation between lack of education and the problems in the country. This in itself is a step in the right direction in tackling the serious crisis in the country and hopefully serious efforts will be made to look for a solution once the source of the problem is identified.

Since rehabilitation effort would essentially start from afresh, it would be wise to plan well and lay the foundations for well-thought-out institutions that are based on sound principles. This means avoiding past mistakes in institution building that are often blamed on colonialism. Therefore, this might be a golden opportunity and a blessing in disguise. In this connection, Mah (2000) examines how Somali indigenous knowledge has been historically marginalized in the school system, particularly in higher education. He rightly warns of the impact of such marginalization of indigenous knowledge system on nation’s intellectual development. Any future rehabilitation project of higher education should also guard against maintenance of the hegemony of Western knowledge in Somalia in the development discourse.

Generally-speaking, Somali educators are upbeat and optimistic in their assessment of the current condition of education in the country, despite many problems
that need to be solved in order to consolidate the successes made so far. Seen in the context of the current security and socio-economic environment, today’s achievements are significant. The achievements obviously make the people involved in the process optimistic and proud of the successes made so far. In addition to the community participation and similar social networks that helped the community keep going under these conditions, the positive roles of the Somalis in the diaspora have also been noted in contributing to the reconstruction efforts back home.

Amid the general optimism, though, there are voices of concern for the unknown and unpredictable future facing the country. Even if we take the upbeat assessment of the current situation on face value, we would not fail to realize that there are some people who give a bleak assessment of the future and think that the current situation is not sustainable. Although some Somalis would argue that the society is managing schools without state involvement and will continue to do so, many educators realize that despite the current successes there is only so much that private education could provide and there are areas that only a state can cover. One important reason why the state is seen as necessary is the hope that it will expand schools to remote areas where private individuals and organizations do not operate, because the community there is too poor to afford to pay the cost. Perhaps the most serious problems that impede the development of education are insecurity and political instability, because security is a prerequisite for educational institutions to thrive.

By virtue of being privately run, the current education system lacks a unified orientation or even any cohesive curriculum guidelines. Judging by that fact alone, one might conclude that the reconstruction is not producing the best result which is a modern
system of education that is free from past defects. However, it is important to bear in mind that current efforts are just a beginning and although the security and socio-economic conditions are not favorable, there is still an opportunity to effect meaningful reforms in all aspects of education.

In conclusion, this study shows that despite the insurmountable difficulties, some tangible results have been achieved under the circumstances. The current insecurity and lawlessness mean that the civilian population faces serious difficulties on daily basis. In spite of that, the society has faired well in adapting to the condition, relying on a variety of social network in order to cope with the state collapse.
CHAPTER FIVE
THE PROCESS OF SCHOOLING IN SOMALIA TODAY

Resilience Amid Statelessness

Summary
The purpose of this study was to investigate the current state of education in Somalia since the collapse of the central authority in 1991 and if and how the community is coping with the lack of the state. The study also explored educational institutions and systems that have emerged throughout the crisis. Similarly, the study looked into the various actors that have contributed and are contributing to the revival of schools after the destruction of the old system. By looking into these different but interwoven issues, the study hopes to contribute to the understanding of the intricate problem that Somalia is facing today.

The findings of the study suggest that the Somali people have adapted rather well, under the circumstances, to the absence of the state, despite continuing insecurity and lawlessness that prevail in most parts of the country. The civil war has taken its toll on the civilian population and armed militias alike but it seems to have largely subsided now or became sporadic clashes that flare up from time to time. The most serious fighting for years broke out in February this year when a newly-formed anti-terrorism alliance clashed with militias loyal to the Islamic courts over the control of Mogadishu. The fighting claimed many casualties before it was stopped in a truce arranged by local clan elders (Elders mediate truce, 2006). However, most people are still yearning for a stable state that would hopefully restore order and put an end to the lawlessness. This is particularly true in areas where the local community did not benefit from the lawlessness. In contrast to that, some of the warlords and business people who are profiting from the
lack of the state regulation and who can hire enough armed militias to protect their interests would probably like to see the *status quo* continue indefinitely.

The study also documented that educational institutions that have been established since the destruction of the old system are still in their nascent stage and need to be supported for them to yield the desired results. These institutions are inspiring experiments that need to be encouraged further. The overall security and political situation is still precarious but the society seems to be coping with the situation and successful private enterprises, including some private schools that this study has looked into, have sprung up since the collapse of the state.

In order to give a realistic assessment of the current education in Somalia, one needs to take the whole picture into consideration. That is to say that one should take special note of the persistent security problems that educators have to deal with in their efforts to open schools in their communities, as well as the prevailing not-so-good socio-economic conditions in the country. In this stateless situation there are a host of security problems that adversely affect the provision of all public services, such as education. Despite the protracted conflict that has beset the country for the better part of last two decades or, perhaps because of it, the Somali society has shown a remarkable resilience in coping with the situation. The civil war has obliterated state institutions and there were no alternatives to fall back to but the society has adapted to live with the reality. In so doing, traditional and local networks and institutions proved to be useful to the community.
Discussion

This chapter provides the conclusion of the study and attempts to give possible answers to the research questions as gleaned from the data. Through reflections and explanation of the data analysis, I will explain the meaning behind the current schooling experiences in Somalia that emerged from the stories of the research participants, as well as my own observations.

The outline of this study is to examine the literature about the topic under study, do a field research and draw conclusions in an effort to explain the phenomenon under study and helping future researchers and practitioners. I believe that this is critical for understanding the current situation and would contribute to finding a lasting solution to the crisis.

The phenomena and practices described in this study reflect the experiences and perspectives of the individuals who participated in the study. No claim is made here to generalize the findings of the study to other individuals or groups who might have different perspectives on how best education under the current condition or in future can be organized and reconstructed. The key element here is the understanding of the culture of the present-day schooling as far as possible. To achieve this, the activities of the Somali community need to be examined and appropriate explanations sought for them within the context of statelessness and civil war.

As stated earlier in Chapter One, the study is guided by several research questions related to the issue under examination. This chapter addresses the research questions by describing the ways in which the study outcomes can be seen as answering the questions raised. The research questions provide an introduction to the problem under study but do not necessarily encompass all the significant aspects of the complex issues. In discussing
the study findings, I will constantly be referring to the literature that has been introduced in chapter two and will also be citing additional sources relevant to my conclusions. I will also continue using the recurring themes that emerged in the analysis section as an organizing structure to get a complete picture of the phenomenon.

**Statelessness**

Before embarking on the discussion of the themes within the scope of the literature, I would like first to go back to the context in which the study is carried out and chart a theoretical framework for the analysis. Somalia has been in a state of civil war for far too long now. The current state of civil unrest started well before the 1990s when the then unpopular government was fighting its own people. The situation kept on deteriorating until the dramatic collapse of the central government in early 1990s, which, may have appeared to mark the beginning of the civil war but was actually just the climax of an unfolding crisis.

The conflict has since passed through different stages and although the situation largely remains volatile, it seems that the Somali society has come to terms with the bitter reality of stateless life and managed to live with it. The people appear to have passed the stage of shock and some remarkable examples of entrepreneurship in commerce and social services are being seen in the country, indicating that homegrown understanding and perhaps solutions to the crisis might be on the way (Little, 2003 & Menkhaus, 2004).

The idea of a stateless country or society might seem strange to most people to entertain but that is exactly what happened to Somalia in 1991 and continued to be so up until today (Menkhaus (1998, Menkhaus & Prendergast 1995). With the possible exception of some form of government in the breakaway republic of Somaliland in the
northwest, the regional state of Puntland in the northeast and the Transitional
Government that has recently been formed in neighboring Kenya but is so far unable to
exercise control of the country, the country remains largely without a recognized central
authority. Therefore, insecurity and lawlessness remain major problems for local
communities and aid agencies. Due to the lack of law and order and state regulatory
authority, public services, such as education and healthcare have been badly neglected or
largely left to private individuals and humanitarian agencies.

The insecurity and absence of state regulation have also disrupted or adversely
affected the daily lives of the population. The civil war that followed the collapse of the
state forced hundreds of thousands to flee their homes and become either internally-
displaced people inside the country or refugees in neighboring countries, Kenya,
Ethiopia, Djibouti and Yemen or elsewhere in the world. As a consequence, normal
economic production was severely disrupted to the extent that the largely man-made
famine in 1991-1992 killed between 300,000 and 400,000 people and affected as many
as three million others, according to some estimates (The real news from Somalia 1993,
Ahmed & Green, 1999) especially in the traditionally grain producing interriverine region
in the south and southwest. This happened because the farming communities were unable
to cultivate their land properly or their produces were looted or robbed by armed militias.
Owing to its agricultural potentials, this region is likely to remain a sensitive flash point
for competition for land and water even if a central government was to be installed
(Mubarak, 1997).

Insecurity is still an unresolved issue in almost all parts of the country, particularly in and
around Mogadishu. Ironically, this region is also where most of the business activities are
taking place, more people live and as a result more educational institutions are to be found.

It is fair to assume that there are little or no activities of public nature going on in Somalia under the current conditions (Lauderdale & Toggia 1999). If we do taxonomy of statelessness or failed states, we are likely to find insecurity, lawlessness, chaos, lack of public services, such as schools and hospitals, destruction of public properties, refugees, among many others, in our inventory. This assumption would not be totally wrong in many respects as the Somali community is facing various problems of enormous proportion. There is a serious problem of insecurity and lack of law and order in most parts of the country where there are no effective local or central authorities and because of that insecurity, many people cannot go about their daily life unmolested. Because there is no state that represents them Somali people feel harassed and humiliated wherever they go.

It is tragic to note that there are individuals and groups who have benefited and continue to benefit from the lawlessness and consequently do not want to see the state re-established. They fear that they might lose their ill-gotten status if the rule of law is enforced. It is not a coincident then that some of these groups always try to sabotage any attempt to revive the state. A good example of war profiteers are the weapons merchants whose margin of profit shoots up whenever there are more fighting and more killings. For instance, the prices of weapons have doubled these days due to the latest bout of fighting in Mogadishu, where militias linked to Islamic courts clashed with a new "anti-terrorism" alliance backed by powerful warlords. Reporting from the gun market there, Mohamed (2006) makes these comments:
And business is good after last month's fighting killed between 70 and 90 people. The forecast is even better: Islamist militia sources say they expect a new battle at any time. "We get good profits during such times," a young trader who declined to be named said. "Weapons commandeered from the (anti-terrorism) coalition have flooded the market." "It does not mean we want the anarchy to persist ... We are just entrepreneurs," the young trader said sitting at his wooden stall, waiting for customers to buy his dozen or so guns and an RPG (rocket-propelled grenade) hanging from a string.

As I said elsewhere in this study, the security issue is the most intractable problems facing the society in general and education, in particular, and unless and until some kind of solutions is found to it, any attempt at institution building will be shaky, at best. This fact notwithstanding, the majority of Somalis yearn for a state that would bring back the national pride and put the security situation under control.

**Institutions of Statelessness**

The picture is not all that gloomy, though, and life goes on as the society has largely managed to acclimatize to the situation. It seems rather strange but yet remarkable that the Somali society showed this resiliency by coping with statelessness in the twenty-first century. Since the question of the Somali state formation is still being discussed in various political reconciliation conferences with no agreement in sight among warring factions, the nature of state or statelessness of Somalia is an unfolding political drama. The Somali experience since the collapse of the state, especially the failure of the international intervention, has offered a clear challenge to certain aspects of conventional theory about economy, politics and social order and the very premises under which
Western diplomacy and development agencies operate, including “assumptions about the role of states in maintaining order and services” (Little, 2003, p. 1).

To some extreme free market enthusiasts who see any government involvement in the economy as inherently bad, the collapse of the Somali state was a good opportunity to test their hypothesis. The Somali case became a laboratory for capitalism. Here, the manner in which the business sector has prospered in the absence of government has attracted particular praise. These free market idealists were even full of praise of how the Somali people have resisted the centralization of authority and how the Somali nation abolished the central government in 1991 (Little, 2003).

It is historically inaccurate, though, to suggest that the Somali people had voluntarily abolished their central government. It all happened as a result of bad policy by the government and equally bad response to it by opposition factions. That is the reason why the Somalis are all united, at least by judging from their participation in numerous reconciliation conferences, in trying to revive some form of authority in successive reconciliation forums and no serious suggestion has so far been made to abandon the quest for the revival of the Somali state all together despite repeated failures. The free market enthusiasts know all too well that the so-called free market environment in Somalia has not benefited all sections of the population equally. Moreover, the scope of the present market economy is limited and the sustainability of the present market-based institutions is in serious question. With the increasing insecurity and piracy on Somali maritime waters, international vessels might find it difficult to dock at Somali ports. The fate of air transportation and telecommunication sectors which have greatly
benefited from the lack of regulation is also tied with the goodwill of foreign states and companies that facilitate their successful operations.

It appears to me that the absence of the state in Somalia has so far had the following adverse consequences:

1. In the absence of recognized state authority, Somalia has become not only a security risk but also dangerously unprotected. Somali waters can easily be used for illegal fishing and indigenous fish population depleted. The country’s land and sea are in real danger of being used as toxic dump. The environmental hazards that are done to the soil, plants and animals by Somalis and foreigners alike are incalculable.

2. Security being the single most essential responsibility of the state, there is currently a widespread discrimination and attacks on vulnerable minority clans and all those who cannot defend themselves in this lawlessness where those with most numbers and guns rule.

3. Due to the lack of recognized state, Somalis are humiliated all over the world, whether in refugee camps in neighboring countries, asylum seekers in the West or simply traveling.

4. Because most social services such as education and health are usually supported by the state, even in developing countries, schools and hospitals have been destroyed by the civil war and whatever has been rehabilitated by aid agencies and private individuals cannot cover the need of the people. As a result, a generation of young people without formal education is becoming adult members of the society with disastrous consequences.
5. The economy is unlikely to recover to capacity without some form of state regulation and with absence of recognized state that can deal with international bodies and foreign countries; the country will not get much needed external debt and international aid.

Little (2003b) raised similar concerns about the risk posed by the current statelessness and cautioned readers not to misread any success in the economic sector and construe it as showing that the state is not needed. To the contrary, he gave the following reasons why a strong state is needed in the country sooner, rather than later:

- To ensure security of borders with neighboring countries and establish trade and political agreement with them.
- To protect its natural resources and conclude bilateral agreements with neighboring countries to ensure that they are not unfairly exploited. Similarly, to prevent massive deforestation and uncontrolled fishing and dumping of suspected toxic wastes.
- To engage into negotiation of trade and other agreements with foreign nations to ensure that Somali traders are fairly treated.
- To provide support public institutions for education and health.
- To reduce reliance on outside assessment and assistance in times of disasters.

Nevertheless, the collapse of the state has encouraged private individuals and groups to carry out activities that have previously been in the state domain, such as operating schools and hospitals. The success of these privately run public services followed the footsteps of business enterprises that quickly prospered under the
unregulated situation of statelessness. Immediately after the collapse of the state the informal private sector has gained special significance.

Since 1991 Somalia had not had a recognized central government but despite of political discord and continued war in some regions, the Somali economy managed to survive. Private businesses are the most noteworthy success story throughout the years of the crisis which is an encouraging indicator in itself (Little, 2003). This is not to suggest that there are no problems. Not only the sphere of public good is badly neglected but the private businesses also need regulations for them to sustain long-term growth in a secure environment.

**Social Capital**

This study sought to explore the society’s coping mechanism with the undoubtedly difficult conditions of civil war, chaos and statelessness within the theoretical framework of social capital which supposes that social trust and networks help alleviating common problems and creating mechanism for fostering common good. Social capital refers to social networks that bind community members together and which individuals and groups can rely on in times of crisis. Ideally, this function is performed by the civil society while the state, if any, provides protection. Logically, the level of social capital would be higher in a given society if the capacity of civil society for social responsibility and social initiative is higher.

In a violent situation, however, it is clear that war causes the decay and weakening of civil society by reinforcing inward-looking social capital and selfish tendencies in the quest for survival often undermining cross-cutting social capital that serves the common good. Nonetheless, as a recent study indicates, violent conflict might
help raise communal awareness and foster positive social capital in the process. Thus, societies traumatized by violent conflicts might have a better chance to mobilize their resources due to the urgent need to secure basic needs and ensure survival in such situations. The society, therefore, substitute for the state by becoming the main provider of safety nets and basic services. Indications of emerging social capital in conflict situations are normally seen during the conflict or immediately after the cessation of hostilities in the form of local and internal coping mechanisms that provide welfare services or security and protection (Colleta, & Cullen, 2000). Similarly, Gotze (2004) argues that state failure and other social problems may constitute major obstacles to civil society building, because they restrict the public space in which citizens may organize the common good in a universal and democratic manner. However, civil society organizations can emerge in such context as a mechanism to cope with the prevailing social upheaval.

Due to human resilience, difficulties can make become an impetus to hard work and creativity in adverse conditions. Citing social capital as a theoretical explanation for education successes achieved by immigrant children, Lauglo (2000) says: “immigrant youth from certain background lag behind others in school, but they typically do better than might be expected when account is taken of their parents’ social class circumstances and level of schooling” (p. 145). This might suggest that immigrants come with them various aspects of social capital, such as cohesive family and similar community network, capable of effective social regulation. Because these social resources are thought to be lacking in the Western context, immigrant families are able to guide their children more effectively.
In an attempt to exercise absolute power, the collapsed Somali state tried hard to suppress all forms of opposition to it and discouraged formation of any kind of civic organization. The public execution of religious leaders for opposing a new law that contradicted the *Quran* and the arrest and imprisonment of intellectuals suspected of disloyalty to the regime were just a few examples of this policy. This could explain the chaos that engulfed the nation following the state collapse. However, socially responsible civil society organizations began to emerge and provide social services such as education and health care. The most effective among these civic organizations are religious charities that gained community trust, because they are perceived to be less tainted with corruption and clan politics. Presenting the findings of a recent study on the civil societies and their relevance in the current situation, Colleta, & Cullen, (2000), gave this assessment:

In both case studies, Hargeisa and Borama, religious institutions have arisen to make up for the death of state health and education services. Many women’s groups have stepped to the forefront of the peace effort, linking warring clans through exchange and women’s peace discussions. Civil society in northern Somalia has flourished as a result of the demand for services and market opportunities in the absence of state provisions, regulation, and control. (p. 72)

Whether social trust among Somali clans has diminished or thrived due to or in spite of the civil war is debatable. However, the general view is that despite the clan warfare that rages sometimes between two or more clans, trust in the business sense has actually increased. Commenting on this, Little (2003) points out that trust within Somali
clans has actually become more prominent and useful for trading practices in these conditions and seemingly reduced risks and transaction costs. The flipside of clan politics is that trust between members of different clans and sub-clans can sometimes deteriorate to the point that there is almost no trading links between certain parts of Somalia. The tragic consequence of this state of affair is that for the most part, the bulk of trading activities is carried out by members of those clans that are dominant in their respective regions, thereby making the lives of minority communities even more difficult (Mwakikagile, 2001). This situation, perhaps, explains why traders from small minority groups, such as Indian/Pakistanis and Yemeni Arabs and even residents of Banaadir coastal cities, who were prominent traders in pre-civil war period, are less visible on the market today. This is not to say that personal friendship and trade partnership does not transcend clan boundaries. To the contrary, trade partnerships are known to have been established between members of different clans and even with non-Somali partners. Within the Somali context, one could say that trade and religious ties are some of very few social interactions in which Somalis often disregard their clan affiliations (Little, 2003).

**Under Difficult Conditions**

It is in private business that most examples of entrepreneurship and coping with the crisis are cited. Under very difficult circumstances of insecurity and statelessness, Somali traders have exhibited a remarkable resilience in coping with the situation and carrying on a successful cross border trade with neighboring countries, especially Kenya. Utilizing social linkages and strategies, Somali traders in border regions have learned how to get on with their lives under these extremely volatile economic and political
conditions and in some instance prospered, challenging the popular images of a collapsed Somali economy (Little, 2003).

Prior to 1991, livestock trade was oriented towards domestic, cross border, as well as international export markets. After the collapse of the Somali state, however, security risks and lack of state regulation led to the loss of the international market for traders in southern Somalia, because it was the scene where most of the hostilities of the civil were centered. In contrast, livestock export was revived with an even better result in Somaliland and Puntland regional authorities. As for southern Somalia, the most enduring and rewarding trade activities are the cross border livestock export to northern Kenya. Unregulated as it is and even dubbed as “unofficial”, this trade proved its usefulness and effectiveness for both Somali exporters and local traders, and especially for the Somali economy under these conditions (Little, 2003).

Under these conditions, it appears that some sub-sectors are performing better. Mubarak (1997) observed that the most encouraging economic development since the state collapse is the emergence of the private sector, especially in areas where security is maintained. Housing construction is booming in northern regions that have achieved some degree of internal order. In other activities, such as telecommunications, security is not much of a constraint, and they are proliferating in the southern parts of Somalia as well. The new urban economic activities have some similarities in common. First, they are externally financed, or at least the initial capital came from outside. Second, they cater to either international trade to fill the shortfall in domestic production, or facilitate its financing by remittances or serve the needs of Somali expatriates.
The Somali economy is not functioning at full capacity today and certainly nobody is suggesting that the current situation is healthy and should be maintained. All I suggest in this paper which is drawn from the literature is that due to the magnitude of the destruction occasioned by the civil war, it is amazing how it survived and seems to function. The Somali people, especially the business community, contrary to the popular perception, have shown resilience in coping with the difficult situation. All indications are that the economy is likely to survive and maintain its gains and build on the experience of past decade. The private sector has shown remarkable coping ability with security risks and volatile political environment and with any prospect of improved security with minimal amount of regulation; it is likely to get better. It is the public sector institutions, which suffered the most destruction during the civil war, that would require most attention in future reconstruction (Mubarak, 1996). In the small communities that achieved some degree of security with thriving economy in an unprecedented free market environment, the no-government situation has proven to be far better than the repressive government institutions of the pre-civil war regime (Mubarak, 1997).

The apparent success of private business in adapting to the difficult conditions was not lost to the outside world to notice. For instance, the United States Central Intelligence (CIA) Factbook website has the following remarks on the performance of Somalia’s service sector despite the statelessness:

Despite the seemingly anarchic situation, Somalia's service sector has managed to survive and grow. Telecommunication firms provide wireless services in most major cities and offer the lowest international call rates on the continent. In the absence of a
formal banking sector, money exchange services have sprouted throughout the country, handling between $500 million and $1 billion in remittances annually. Mogadishu's main market offers a variety of goods from food to the newest electronic gadgets. Hotels continue to operate, and militias provide security. The ongoing civil disturbances and clan rivalries, however, have interfered with any broad-based economic development and international aid arrangements (The World Factbook: Somalia 2006).

It is easy for outsiders to get impressed with whatever success – however small – they come across in Somalia today, simply because nobody would expect anything in such conditions.

**Education in Transition**

Reconstruction of education during and after violent conflict is fraught with intricate problems. Many analysts have underscored the importance of early investment in education as a necessary step in post-conflict reconstruction efforts (Reshaping the future, 2005. This is due to the fact that, as is the case in Somalia, the old system is completely destroyed and there is little to base the reconstruction on. In addition, the security and socio-economic situation is generally not conducive to establishing schools the way educators would like. Therefore, in order to successfully achieve educational reconstruction after violent conflict, educational practitioners should be mindful of two important issues:

1. Without introducing meaningful reform, reconstruction of education risks the danger of reproducing the very factors that contributed to the conflict in the first place.
2. Under the condition of conflict or post-conflict situations there is often an understandable but pervasive sense of urgency on the part of educational practitioners attempting to carry out the educational reconstruction. A recent study reiterated this realization of the need to combine reform and urgency and concluded that: “Postconflict societies face the extraordinary demands of simultaneous reconstruction and reform. The context offers both opportunities for change and the challenges of an extremely complex and demanding environment.”(Reshaping the future, 2005, p. 85)

One of the research questions that this study hoped to answer was how is the Somali society coping with the absence of state-supported education and how is education being restructured under the present circumstances? In responding to this question, educators are generally of the view that the society has assumed the responsibility of education. However, there are some voices within the profession that insist that little has been achieved and the present situation is untenable, because only the state can perform the task of regulating and developing education. The findings of this study indicate that a good number of schools of all grades have been established in the last ten years or so and many of them are doing just as good as any school in similar circumstances. One would appreciate even better the fact that thousands of children are able to go school. These children could have ended up on the street or joined armed militias at this tender age. Schooling gives them a glimpse of hope that they would be responsible citizens that might steer the nation out of the current crisis.

The most obvious achievement made during this period of state collapse is perhaps the fact that schools have been reestablished, many students have been given the
chance to go to school. The role that teachers played in this early stage of re-
establishment of education was crucial but they too were reluctant to get involved in the
beginning for obvious security reasons. Teachers themselves acknowledge that at the
beginning of the current crisis, many of them left their schools and fled to safety when
the state that used to employ them had collapsed. They have now come back to their
profession and education is one of few professions that employs educated Somalis and is
likely to remain so even when there is a state.

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 comparison 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, at the primary level, compulsory 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.

It was clear from the discussions I had – as outlined in Chapter Four – either in
groups or individually, with Somali educators who have been involved in education
before the state collapse and in the current education that the Somali people have
understood the value of education more than even before. Perhaps, the most radical
change in attitude is that the community has realized that schools belong to them and they need to take care of them by sacrificing their time and wealth in supporting education, because there is no state. During these chaotic times, education is one of few public services that have been revived after the collapse of the state. Teachers and schools administrators I met were grateful that the community has really supported schools in many ways.

The civil war has caused a great deal of instability to the society. Due to the unpredictability of war-related incidents, it is very difficult to organize normal activities, such as schooling and health care, because war could suddenly break out in a locality and cause the school in the area to be closed. Despite of these difficulties, the community had to keep going and make sacrifices for the sake of their children. The beginning was difficult but it has now taken root. The present schooling arrangement evolved gradually from a humble beginning at the time of famine relief. For example, when they were setting up the first schools, many relief organizations used to give parents food rations in order to bring their children to school and books and school uniforms were also supplied. After a while, the food and school supplies were gradually discontinued but education remained free of charge for some time. Eventually, parents were required to pay school fees which they happily do today. That is why educators who manage private schools believe that the people have understood that schools belong to them. They also believe that even when 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.
Coping Mechanisms

The study also looked into the factors or forces that are contributing to the success or failure of education during and aftermath of the conflict in Somalia. It is clear from the data that there are multiple factors that contributed to the gains that have been made and similarly there are other factors that are behind the constant problems being encountered by schools and the community at large. Overall, there are multiple factors that play different roles in education. The factors that contributed to the successes in the field represent the coping mechanisms for the community under these conditions. Likewise, such factors as insecurity and economic hardship are some of the obstacles that seriously impede education. The following factors stand out prominently as the most significant actors contributing to the success of education. They are teachers, community participation and external aid.

Teacher’s Role

Despite coming from a background of heavily centralized setting, where education is tightly controlled by the state, some Somali teachers have contributed to the efforts to reestablish schools following the destruction of state-run schools. Without them no school would have been set up. As a result of their action, teachers’ role grew in importance. It was just natural that after the collapse of the state, the responsibility of setting up and managing schools fell on private individuals, most of whom were teachers, because they were the ones who had the skills and training to discharge such responsibilities. Thus, many schools were re-opened or started by teachers, either individually or in groups. Sometimes teachers had to join and pull their meager resources together to renovate schools. In many instances, schools were set up in rented private houses that have not been designed to be schools. However, teachers too were affected by
the civil war, like all segments of the society. Many of them fled the country for obvious security reasons. That is why schools had to close. Some of them never returned but others returned and it is these returnees and those teachers who never left that started the first schools. Teachers were at the same time looking for a decent means of earning a living. Being unemployed and in search of jobs it was only natural that they set up schools, because teaching was obviously the job they knew better.

**Community Participation**

It is clear from the present situation that community involvement in education is the only viable option left for Somalia since the state collapsed. The role of the state did not only weaken 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 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) calls ‘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 emergency nature, the community should critically consider this as acts of liberation of mind and institutions. Thus, whatever the 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 obtained 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.

Modern Schools  

State  

Dugsi Quranic Schools  

NGOs/ Aid Agencies  

Traditional Education  

Family/ Community  

Figure 2: Relations between schools and various actors in education after the state collapse.

Modern Schools  

State  

Dugsi Quranic Schools  

NGOs/ External Aid Agencies  

Traditional Education  

Family/ Community
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 with its dominant role in providing modern education before its collapse.

**The Sustainability Question**

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 be self-sufficient in resources and management. External and local aid agencies may have started the current education in Somalia but community involvement is the safety net for its future sustainability. Another important sustainability factor for education is the cash flow that comes into the sector, directly or indirectly, from the increasingly vital remittances by the Somalis in the diaspora. Because millions of Somalis fled the country, many of them being in North America, Australia and Western Europe, remittances have become the backbone of the Somali economy since the state collapse. This trend of
sending remittances by diaspora communities to family members back home is likely to continue; at least unless and until a new generation that does see this cultural link with the country emerges.

Similarly, the fact that most schools are private and get their income from school fees make them at least theoretically sustainable, supposing that there would be enough people that are able to pay the fees. Unfortunately, the majority of the population are not able to pay school fees under the current socio-economic conditions. It also emerged from the data that the Somali business people do not contribute to the reconstruction and maintenance of schools in their neighborhood. It is hard to foresee any long-term sustainability of education if the wealthy members of the community are not interested in supporting it, because outside help cannot be relied on for long. Educators who run schools have realized this fact and started charging school fees when outside support began to dwindle due to donor fatigue, among other reasons.

**Emerging Systems**

The study sought to explore the educational processes and systems, such as curriculum and language of instruction, that are emerging under these conditions following the destruction of state education system. In this connection, the data has shed some light on three issues:

- Curriculum and medium of instruction
- Islamic education
- Private schools
The study certainly touches on other aspects of education but I thought it would be helpful to limit detail discussions to these issues due to their close relations with the research questions.

Curriculum and Medium of Instruction

Due to the lack of national educational policy or any central regulation on the issue, there is common complaint of the lack of a unified or standardized curriculum to be followed in schools. Many teachers and parents feel that despite the success and usefulness of private education some form of standardized curriculum is necessary. This feeling could be attributed to the fact that Somalis were used to a heavily centralized state-mandated school curriculum and, therefore, see the current situation as chaotic.

Following the state collapse and the ensuing civil war, all the curriculum materials that were developed by the former Ministry of Education have been destroyed along with the destruction of the state. UNESCO and UNICEF have been engaged in producing a reformed version of the Somali curriculum but the process is apparently very slow and syllabi for only up to 6th grade have been completed so far. Similarly, the Islamic Development Bank in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, has undertaken a project of producing an Arabic version of the old Somali national curriculum. Various schools and organizations establishing schools have also adopted, sometimes with some adaptations, foreign school curricula or syllabi from countries that they get support or just depending on availability or perceived quality. This fragmented state of school curriculum is a contentious issue that many people clearly view as chaotic and untenable and would like to see state intervention in school curriculum. On the other hand, there are those who see
Similarly, the lack of official language of instruction in schools is another result of the absence of the state. Like the curriculum, the issue of medium of instruction is closely linked to the source of funding of schools. Because resources and curriculum materials came from Arabic countries in 1990s when Islamic and Arab charities provided funds to revive the public education, those schools that have thus been established adopted Arabic as the medium of instruction. This could explain why most schools have adopted Arabic as the medium of instruction. There are also a growing number of schools that have adopted English as their medium of instruction, reflecting the dominant status of English in the world today.

Although Somalia is thought of as a relatively homogenous country linguistically in Africa, the issue of language policy, official language and language of instruction in schools, had been contended and debated by policy makers since before independence. The issue was only resolved in early 1970s when the military regime adopted Somali as the official language of administration as well as the medium of instruction in schools. However, the problem seems to have emerged once the state has collapsed.

Today, different schools adopt different language of instructions, mainly Arabic and English, with Arabic being the dominant one, depending on the availability of resources and academic background of those in charge of the school. I was, however, surprised to note that support for Somali as a medium of instruction in schools is extremely weak, especially in the Mogadishu area. This is ironic considering how linguistically homogeneous the Somali people are generally and the success of the
Somalization of education and administration by the previous regime during 1970s and 1980s. The rejection by some Somalis of the Somali language as a medium of instruction may be due to the lack of teaching materials in Somali and the common perception that those educated in a foreign language, especially English, stand a better chance of finding jobs. Some might even see the language as part of the state system that was destroyed. However, it must also be said that the lack of institutional support and non-availability of language teaching materials in Somali also works against its use as a medium of instruction in schools today.

Italian, a former colonial language which served as an official language even after independence, is almost out of the picture. As a result very few schools, if any, use it as a medium of instruction or even as a foreign language. The current generation of Somali educators does not seem to see any future for Italian in schools or administration. This is in sharp contrast to the fact that Italian was the main language of instruction in most departments of Somali National University as recent as 1991 when the country’s education collapsed along with the state.

The following table shows the shifting position of the medium of instruction in schools in Somalia as dictated either by language policy or simply by the prevailing socio-economic conditions under three different political regimes. The first regime was the civilian government that came to power immediately after independence in 1960, the second regime was the military junta that ruled the country from 1969 to 1991 and the third regime is the current stateless situation from 1991 to the present.
Table 1: Language policy and medium of instruction under different regimes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language status</th>
<th>Somali</th>
<th>Arabic</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Italian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civilian</td>
<td>3\textsuperscript{rd} priority</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} priority</td>
<td>1\textsuperscript{st} priority</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military</td>
<td>1\textsuperscript{st} priority</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} priority</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stateless</td>
<td>1\textsuperscript{st} priority</td>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} priority</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two colonial languages, Italian and English, were given high priority in administration and education during the post-colonial era, because only a small section of the Somali population was fully literate in Arabic and the society did not agree on a script for the Somali language (Lewis, 2002). It appears at the moment that Somali has taken a back seat as a medium of instruction but the situation could change if and when a national government invests in it as it did in 1970s. The popularity of Arabic and English is a reflection of the current socio-economic reality that most Somalis are facing, be it Arab NGOs supporting schools, Somali parents preferring their children to learn Arabic for religious reasons, in the case of Arabic, or the dominant position of English in the world today.

**Islamic Education**

The importance of Islam to education in a Muslim society such as Somalia need not be emphasized. Along with the cultural sense of Somaliness, Islam represents the strongest bond that holds the Somali society together (Lewis, 1963, Laitin & Samatar, 1987). Most observers agree that the Somali society has been thoroughly Islamized
having been in extensive contact with the Muslim world for over a thousand years. The Islamic influence on the social life is not confined to matters of religion but transcends it to politics, economics and education (Lewis, 1966, p. 253).

The role of Islam has become even more prominent under the current crisis. Acknowledging that “an Islamic revival is evident” at the moment, Adam et al. (1998) said: “Somalia’s Islamic revival promises to strengthen institutions of civil society and should be reinforced” (p.vi). Whether or not a school is designated as Islamic Islam will always play a significant role in orientation and curriculum guide. This is true in all walks of life and any serious attempt to deal with the current crisis has to take this reality into consideration. Alluding to this fact, Samatar (2002) said: “If kin culture and Islamic precepts were the anvils on which the old *Umma* was forged, any serious discussion of a new polity will have to begin with an extensive exploration of this cultural hinterland” (p. 239).

Apart from the traditional *dugsi* schools where small children learn how to write and read the *Quran*, Somalia does not have a separate Islamic school system, parallel to the modern school system. The *dugsi* system is perhaps the most stable and sustainable local educational institution the community has ever had. Its success lies in the unshaken local support and its use of locally made and widely available teaching materials, which consist of erasable wooden slates, hand-made pencils and ink made of milk and charcoal. In 1993-4, UNICEF commissioned a survey on *dugsi Quranic* schools with the aim of assisting them in order to widen access to public education, close gender disparity and improve children’s learning environment (Koranic School Project, 1995).
The *dugsi Quranic* schools have probably been around for as long as Somalis were Muslims but in matters of literacy and education, it is worth noting the far-reaching impacts of Sheikh Yusuf al-Kawneyn, the great Muslim scholar, who many centuries ago devised a Somali notation system for Arabic alphabets which considerably aided the teaching of Arabic and the Quran and is still in use today (Lewis 1966, Laitin, 1997).

Although *dugsi* school is crucially important, this study did not specifically look into the operations of the *dugsi* school and its contribution to the development of literacy in Somalia which is better be dealt with in separate studies. However, the fact that the community, and not the state, has always been in charge of the establishment and management of *dugsi* schools was of special interest to me while looking into the relations between schools and the community.

For centuries, the Somali community, as opposed to the state, has been in charge of Islamic education in all aspects, providing financial and administrative support. During the pre-colonial period, Islamic education was the only organized education available and that might also be the case in many parts of the country since the collapse of the state. However, it had to co-exist with modern, Western oriented school system since the onset of colonialism. Where and when the two systems co-existed, the state – colonial or national – was in charge of the modern schools and the community was responsible for the Islamic schools. The two systems played supplementary roles to each other in communities where both systems existed.

The Somali community had always assumed the responsibility of *dugsi* Islamic education in all aspects, providing financial and administrative support. The reason why the community readily supports the Islamic schools and the modern schools goes back to
the history of the modern education which was introduced by colonial administration and Christian missionaries. The society was suspicious about modern schools when they were first introduced, because their perceived Christian connection. Even when national governments took over state institutions after independence, modern education was still seen as a state function that has nothing to do with the community. Ironically, this dual system of education still persists even today when the state which used to support the modern schools is no longer in the picture. The society still sees a dichotomy between the two systems and although there is growing community involvement in supporting modern education, it goes nowhere near the support accorded to the *dugsi Quranic* school system which is deeply engrained in the Somali culture.

**Private Schools**

In the absence of the state that would have monopolized the public sector, it would be difficult to draw a distinction between public and private sectors. This distinction often becomes blurred in all post-conflict contexts (Reshaping the future, 2005). For convenience sake, it suffices in this new dispensation to consider all services whose utilities are for public good as public sector and those whose utilities are for private use as private sector. Therefore, education should fall under the public sector category but with the exception few community schools that are supported by international aid agencies, most schools are run privately and financed by school fees.

Dispensing education in privately run schools in the case of Somalia is the logical consequence of weakness or absence of state authority. Even in situations where there are state supported public schools, private schools are often coveted for their academic excellence. This perception might be related to the socio-economic background of their
students, because they are normally selected by the school or their parents select the school for them. Nonetheless, private schools often outperform state supported public schools in academic achievement tests. Talking on this general perception of private school superiority in the case of U.S. schools, Benveniste, Carnoy & Rothstein (2003) pointed out that “Policymakers often posit that private schools are more successfully organized around academic achievement objectives and are more successful in emphasizing behavioral goals.” (p.xiii)

Private ownership of schools was nonexistent in Somalia since the military nationalized all means of economic production and social services in early 1970s until the state collapse in 1990s. Schools of all levels, except the Quranic dugsi schools, were state-financed and managed. At times this had led to a remarkable expansion of access to school to many parts of the country. However, when the state capacity to deliver services weakened due to institutional corruption, militarization and devastating war neighboring countries, schools were among the first to be neglected.

Following the state collapse and destruction public schools, privately owned schools emerged from the rubble. Quite spontaneously, teachers and other educators who realized the need for schools opened their private schools. They didn’t even need to seek permission to operate or regulations and curriculum guidelines to follow. It was just a private enterprise on its own. Initially, it was in business enterprises that attracted more private investment and resulted in some tangible successes.

The success of the private entrepreneurship following the state collapse has encouraged Somali educators to set up private education, hoping it too might generate income for them. It was just natural human instinct that everyone looked for the
profession they thought they could succeed and it was education that teachers knew that they were good at. The newfound freedom from the totalitarian regime has also enabled the community to shape education the way they wished. In a sense, the Somali people felt that the totalitarian regime was an obstacle on their way to accomplishment and now they are free they became confident that they could achieve something. We should not forget in this context that one of the factors that contributed to the success of education was the fact that the people did not have any alternative to private education, because there was no state to support education since the state has disintegrated.

Currently, private education is well established in major urban centers and weak or non-existent in rural areas where the community cannot afford the cost. As pointed out earlier in this study, public education or state supported school system does not exist at the moment, simply because there has not been an effective state in the country for the last decade and a half.

It goes without saying that private schools are financed mainly with school fees paid by students and/or their parents. Some schools have started with generous support by aid agencies but they too started charging school fees. This is the current picture in major cities, such as Mogadishu. The rationale for introducing schools is obviously that since there is no state that supports education, the organizations and individuals managing schools have to charge school fees to generate income. Unfortunately, those who can afford to pay fees are very few and due to this disparity, there is a real concern that private education has severely limited the access to school of many children. That is a question that private school providers do not have answers to. The only solace for this obvious source of inequality is that there are some schools that generate income and
become a source of economic production, get revenues to manage themselves and at the same time serve the community by providing badly needed education. The money thus generated through school fees make the school self-sufficient, offer the students chance of learning and create jobs for teachers and other school staff. As stated elsewhere in this study, the culture of paying school fees was non-existent in Somalia prior to the collapse of the state which used to provide free education.

A legitimate question that poses itself is what will be the fate of these private schools when there is an effective state in place and will the state take over all schools or set up its own public school system, parallel to the private one? It is clear from the current political scenario in the country that a strong state that could monopolize public school system is highly unlikely in the near future. Understandably, many of the educators are of the view that private schools are going to be there even when there is a state. They may have to operate according to new state regulations or follow a national curriculum but they will not be closed or taken over by the state.

One of the hallmarks of the privately run schools that represent the bulk of the current education in Somali is a lack of unified curriculum, as the Somali education used to have before the state collapse. Sheer necessity dictated to individual schools to improvised and adopt whatever they can lay hands on. The results are often patchworks of syllabi and curricula that have been borrowed from foreign systems. As we have seen in this chapter, some educators view this state of affair as problematic, while others see it healthy.
Comparison with the Time of the State

It is obvious that a healthy comparison cannot be drawn between the current stateless situation and the situation when there was a state, however weak or corrupt. The recourses at the disposal of the state are always more than what the community can pull together. Some aspects of education are, however, less successful than others in the absence of the state. Access to schools is one such aspect where the current education lags behind compared with the state’s supported education. Asked to make such comparison between the current education and the one that existed during the time when there was a state, participants were quick to point to the problem of access to education, or the lack thereof, for most Somali children. Educators agree that there is no solution in sight for the problem, unless there is a state involvement. This is what Farah Abdulqadir had to say on the problem:

The biggest problem facing the current education is that only a limited number of student benefits from it and close to 90% of school age children are not going to school… the present education is never an alternative to the state-run education, because this private education will never give equal access to all the people due to the fact that it is by nature and material constraint limited and the people cannot afford to pay the cost (Interview, January 2005).

Quantitatively, the current education is limited in scope and there are fewer graduates being produced compared to the time of the state. This small number is easier to be absorbed into the local market but this too is bound to change. It is also true that:

Even when there was a state, education was not enough to give students sufficient qualification for jobs, was not relevant to national goals by instilling patriotism in students and could not make individuals achieve personal aspirations. University
graduates often ended up in the street engaged in a variety of vending activities to earn a living (Farah Abdulqadir, Interview, January 2005)

All agree that unless there is a state, the problem of educational access cannot be solved but steps can be taken to ease it. Educators alone should not be expected solve the problem of access. This should be addressed by all sections of the society, such as business people, cultural and religious leaders and political factional leaders to find a mechanism to solve it.

A comparison in quality of education between the current education and the education provided by the state before the collapse can be drawn. However, such comparison requires that the standard of quality of education needs to be set first. “If the benchmark is the knowledge acquired by the students, there are schools in the country which provide students with education that allows them to compete in the job market or pursue further education here or elsewhere” (Farah Abdulqadir, Interview, January 2005).

As for the question of curriculum, most educators see the current situation as problematic. Since education in the country is all private and there is no unified curriculum and schools adopt the curriculum they choose, the curriculum crisis is often cited as an obstacle to development. “This is in my view the biggest obstacle facing the Somali education today”, said Abdirahman Sheikh (Interview, December 2004) when asked to comment on this.

Otherwise, they said that important and tangible achievements have been made and there have been positive developments in the last few years, compared with the time of the state.
Societal Rehabilitation

Education has an important role to play in the rehabilitation of the country after the devastating civil war. However, for the educational rehabilitation efforts to produce results, concerted efforts must be made to address various security, socio-economic and infrastructural problems. Along these lines, a recent study recognized the role education could play in building peace and development after violent conflict. It concluded that:

Education does not cause wars, nor does it end them. It does, however, frequently contribute to the factors that underlie conflict, but it also has the potential to play a significant role both directly and indirectly in building peace, restoring countries to a positive development path, and reversing the damage wrought by civil war. (Reshaping the future, 2005, p. 86)

The biggest and most significant rehabilitation is perhaps saving children and young people from the civil war once and for all by sending them to school and thus reducing their chances of involvement in the war either as victims of perpetrators. Generally speaking, there are no security incidents or clashes in schools where people from different clans come together, while it is quite possible that there are clashes in their respective localities. So, education has a big role to play in saving and rehabilitating the society, because a youth pulled out of militia and gangster life in the street and educated is likely to influence and attract others to school. There are literally tens of thousands of secondary school students in Mogadishu today, whose age range between 15 and 22 years. Just imagine if this number of young men were on the street and not in school. They would probably have join armed militias and made life in the city unbearable.

School is beneficial to the students for two reasons. First, they are saved from gun life on the street and second, they acquire knowledge and skills that would help them in
their future life as adult members of the society. Clearly, knowledge changes student’s attitudes and habits. Therefore, education saves students a great deal. Once educated, people would understand the value of life and would care for their lives and their surroundings. They would also care for future development. Otherwise, life and death would be the same for them and would take up the gun and engage in destructive behavior. Research participants told me that they have seen that when young men who were militiamen go to school and get educated, they do not want to go back to the gangsters’ life in the street. I felt that there is a growing realization that education plays a major role in changing the Somali society and restores social cohesion and confidence in the community. Even students forge friendship and brotherhood among themselves. These students are the hope of the future. Even if they do not get good jobs, which is their ambition, at least they have learned the value of life and on top of that they hopefully have acquired skills that would help them survive. Certainly, they would not go back to the street, take up guns and join militias. To the contrary, they are expected to be role models for the militiamen of their age to abandon that habit and go to school, instead.

Somalia has been torn apart by the civil war and in order to reverse the trend a major social reconstruction need to be undertaken. It might seem slow but education is a sure of attempting such social reconstruction in a positive way. This is best done by enrolling the largest possible number of children in schools and making the community in charge of the schools.

**Lessons Learned From Other Contexts**

The conventional view on modern political science is that nation-states are still “the most viable political means of coping with the challenges of an increasingly global
age.” They “are the key to, or a fulcrum of, reasonable world stability in the foreseeable future” (Hough, 2003, p. 125). Yet, the phenomenon of failed states, such as Somalia, is increasingly becoming common in the world since the end of the Cold War, threatening not only the people who live within their borders but also, according some analysts, the very foundation of the world order (Rotberg, 2003). Similarly, Meierhenrich (2004) describes the problem of state failure as “one of the greatest political and humanitarian challenges facing the world in the twenty-first century” (p. 153). Although most examples of state failure are to be found in Africa, with Somalia being an extreme case, there are other examples in almost all continents. Even in Europe, the cradle of the modern nation-state, we find failed or failing states, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina and other constituent republics of the former Yugoslavia in the Balkan. In Asia, perhaps Afghanistan leads the list of failed or failing states. There are also several such examples in Latin America. Closest to the Somali case in severity are examples from Africa, such as Liberia, Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of Congo, among others. Useful lessons can be learned from other examples of state failure where the local community with the help of the international community tried to keep going and establish schools in varying shapes.

In the aftermath of violent conflict, reconstruction would require rebuilding a social capital and trust that could bridge social fault lines of the society. According to Colletta, Kostner & Wiederhofer (2004) “veteran associations in Uganda and Mozambique, (two countries that have just come out of devastating civil wars), have proven to be particularly effective in mobilizing resources for economic development” (p177). Trust and hope are prerequisites in social reconstruction but are not enough to
achieve it. This must be strengthened with institution building. A recent study on postconflict reconstruction in a number of African contexts has concluded that “building the rule of law ought to have high priority in postconflict reconstruction” (Widner, 2004, p. 225)

In one of the most remarkable examples of education in war time, guerilla groups in Eritrea fighting for independence from Ethiopia during the 1970s and 1980s have managed to integrate some form of schooling into their struggle. This kind of education has to be highly volatile and inevitably disrupted occasionally by the war or similar circumstances (Gottesman, 1998: 86-94). This education proved its usefulness both to the community and the armed struggle and as such the lessons learned from it can be useful in other difficult situations, such as Somalia today.

**Recommendations**

While there have been some encouraging signs in setting up schools, the situation on the ground still remains grave and requires more concerted efforts to redouble what has been achieved so far and add innovative ideas. It is crucially important to build on what has been achieved, instead of dismantling it and trying to start from afresh. As everywhere in public life, efforts in the education sector can only succeed if made in a collaborative way. Individuals and groups who are engaged in education need to cooperate among themselves and with other actors in business, security, health, the media, religious leaders, clan elders and the community at large.

Efforts are underway to re-establish the Somali state and although consensus has so far proven to be elusive, some form of state authority is being agreed upon by different political actors with the help of the neighboring countries and the international
community. Any such new state is hoped to bolster national self-pride and improve the security situation but it is unlikely to provide all essential services, including education. Therefore, the state, if and when it is established, should work closely with the civil society who has gained some valuable experience throughout the crisis in their struggle to cope with statelessness.

Following close observation of the situation at hand and considering the possible political and economic scenarios that the country might be facing in the near future, this study makes the following recommendations. The recommendations are independent of whether there is a state or not.

1. Businesspeople should get involved in supporting education, either as an investment or as an altruistic gesture on their part. After all, many of them have benefited greatly from the stateless situation. Therefore, they should pay back to their community, voluntarily.

2. Schools and organizations running schools should implement school fees waiver for needy students through the creation of waqfs, bursaries or similar endowment funds.

3. International and local aid agencies should give more support in school reconstruction and teacher training to impoverished rural areas and outlying regions. Unlike the major urban centers, such as Mogadishu, the communities in these areas are unable to support schools through school fees.

4. The Somali community, in general and the educators in particular, need to devise an innovative way of extending educational access to large numbers of the nomads who constitute the majority of the population in the countryside. This
could mean mobile schools. In this respect, educators need to learn valuable
lessons of adaptability and sustainability from the *Quranic* schools.

5. The schools that have been set up and other educational institutions that have
been put in place during the years of the crisis constitute a major achievement that
needs to be given further encouragement and improved upon.

6. Although state intervention is necessary to safeguard the interest of the poor and
disadvantaged sections of the community, such intervention should be measured
and should not be detrimental to the existing private education which has been
painstakingly put together by dedicated educators.

7. Reconstructing education in Somalia is at the heart of state formation that the
international community is trying to help Somalis achieve. Therefore, a major part
of these efforts need to be focused on supporting education. This would mean, not
only availing sufficient funds for schools but also providing technical assistance
and expertise for an extended period of time until such time that those objectives
are accomplished.

8. While not underestimating the importance of teaching foreign languages in the
world today, I strongly advise schools throughout Somalia to pay more attention
to the importance of teaching Somali, not only for the preservation of the
language but for the cognitive development of Somali children as well.

**Conclusion**

In order to fully comprehend the depth of the crisis in Somalia today, it just makes
sense to view it as an historical process that has been unfolding since the colonial era.

The Somali society enjoys a relatively cultural cohesiveness but the state has never been
fully institutionalized. In addition to the typical post-colonial problems that almost all African and other developing nations are grappling with, some social scientists have pointed to the apparent tension between the pastoralist way of life that great many Somalis lead and the demands of modern statehood (Mazrui, 1997). Referring to this discrepancy, Laitin & Samatar (1987) described Somalia as a nation in search of a state in their book by that title well before the present state collapse. When the state finally collapsed, many Somalis just went back to their old tradition of clans and sub-clans for local governance and dispute resolution with Islam being the ultimate reference point. It is against this backdrop, the eventual state collapse and the subsequent civil war that the current attempts at reviving education should be understood.

But why is education emerging in Somalia today and why would anyone think of schools under these conditions? I think 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 its people to provide them 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 ten years of the military rule in 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.

The Somali crisis is intricate and multi-faceted and, as such, cannot be solved with quick fixes. It needs a holistic approach to diagnose the root causes of the problem and attempt to reconstruct the social institutions on strong basis. The society has been held hostage by warlords and similar destructive elements for so long, because, as Clarke & Gosende (2003) put it, “the forces of disorder were stronger than the normal people, who wanted nothing more than an opportunity to live in peace” (p. 131). Therefore, the society needs to liberate itself from oppression through meaningful education. This is what Freire (1993) calls a humanizing vocation that involves consciousness on the part of the society to understand the real conditions that they are in and equally conscious efforts to find a way out of it. This path might seem slow but in the long run it is a sure path to solution. The educational reconstruction, efforts underway in Somalia today, literally amount to starting from scratch, because state institutions have totally disintegrated. Therefore, it would be wise to plan well and consider the occasion as an opportunity to rectify past mistakes. Commenting on the present crisis in Somalia and possible recovery plan, Samatar (2002) said:

Such a condition is unequalled in contemporary African experience. For the Somalis, then, to reformulate the state is no less than to reinvent themselves as well as the nation, a colossal assignment by any measure and a warning to other Africans of how horrific things can get. If there is any silver lining, it is this: Somalis may have a chance to start all over again, and to pioneer, whatever the variable geometry, a new sort of developmental and human-rights based post-colonial national politics (p. 242)
This quote captures both the desperation and hope that the present Somali situation evokes. It is my sincere hope that the rebuilding that is going to take place would be based on a solid and sound ground and that past mistakes would not be repeated.

Despite some important achievements made in establishing private education institutions after the collapse of the state, there is no illusion that the current situation is any substitute for the state. People generally realize that the role of the state, especially in regulation, is conspicuously missing and is particularly needed in poorer parts of the country and in matters of curriculum guide in all schools. Educators generally agree that one of the biggest obstacles that the current education is facing is the absence of the state, because there are necessary social functions that can only be performed by the state. These include security and supervisory functions. This is the reason why some Somali educators have expressed strong views that the society alone cannot handle education without a state. For example, they cite the lack of national educational policy and a unified school curriculum for all schools as some of the problems facing education today.

There are, however, some Somalis who hold similarly strong views that necessity taught them that they can survive without the state. They point out that most of the successes that have been achieved are due to self-sufficiency and awareness on the part of the community.

All in all, despite the persistent security problem, the community has shown resilience and the educational institutions that they put together are functioning, albeit minimally, and this trend is set to continue even if the no state situation continues for the next few years. However, this optimism under the current statelessness is not shared by many people in other regions in the countryside. Here, the community cannot afford to
pay the cost of schools due to the economic hardship. Here, the general view is that unless the state is re-established soon, schools would remain in the poor state that they are today. Therefore, aid agencies and business people ought to put a lot more emphasis on supporting schools in these areas in order to boost access to education, because it is in these areas that the majority of the population lives. Special attention should also be given to encourage girls’ education. 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.

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.
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Appendix A

Ohio University
Consent Form

Title of Research: Educating children in a time of war: Somalia's schools since the collapse of the state in 1991

Principal Investigator: Abdullahi Sheikh Abdinoor
Co-Investigator:
Department: Educational Studies

Federal and university regulations require signed consent for participation in research involving human subjects. After reading the statements below, please indicate your consent by signing this form.

Explaination of Study

What is the purpose of this research?
My purpose of this study is to explore the state of education in Somalia during the years of conflict. I want to see the role education can play as a tool of protection and what educational institutions are used as part of the coping process of the community. Since almost all educational systems and infrastructure have been completely destroyed by the civil war, the study also seeks to explore the emerging systems and forms of education devised or employed by various actors in the education sector.

Procedures I intend to follow:
In order to explore how the Somali community is coping with the unusually difficult situation of statelessness and civil war, I intend to talk to the people involved in education to tell me their experiences concerning the current education in the country. I will also visits educational institutions and observe the actual teaching and learning taking place, as well as organizing group discussions.

Duration of your participation:
Interview: Please be assured that this interview will be short. If you agree to be interviewed, I will take no more than one hour of your time, it will probably take less.
Focus group: Please be aware that there are other people taking part in this discussion but I intend it to be short and friendly. I anticipate that the focus group session will last approximately one hour, but it will depend how smooth the discussion goes

Risks and Discomforts
The risks to the participants in this study are minimal, if any.

Benefits
I hope that this study will contribute to the growing realizing of the role education can play in rehabilitating social life in war-torn societies. I also hope that the study will become part of the
solution to the protracted conflict.
I have no stipulated agreement with any of the participants but I am willing offer any service that I could to the educational institutions during my visit. This could include training teaching, workshops, etc.

Confidentiality and Records
All participants in the study will be assured of full confidentiality of their identity which will only be known to me. The raw data of this study will be safely kept by myself for one year, after which it will be destroyed, and no one else will access to it.

Any compensation
There will be no compensation offered for participation in this study.

Contact information
If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact:
Abdullahi Abdinnoor: email: aal40801@ohio.edu phone: 001-1-740-594-0651 or
Dr Stephen Howard email: howard@ohio.edu phone: 001-1-740-593-1834

If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact Jo Ellen Sherow, Director of Research Compliance, Ohio University,
email: sherow@ohio.edu
phone: 001-1-(740)593-0664.

I certify that I have read and understand this consent form and agree to participate as a subject in the research described. I agree that known risks to me have been explained to my satisfaction and I understand that no compensation is available from Ohio University and its employees for any injury resulting from my participation in this research. I certify that I am 18 years of age or older. My participation in this research is given voluntarily. I understand that I may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of any benefits to which I may otherwise be entitled. I certify that I have been given a copy of this consent form to take with me.

Signature __________________________ Date ________________
Printed Name_________________________
Appendix B

IRB Approval

A determination has been made that the following research study is exempt from IRB review because it involves:

Category 2: research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior

Project Title: Educating Children in a Time of War: Somalia’s Schools Since the Collapse of the State in 1991

Project Director: Abdullahi Sheikh Abdinoor

Department: Educational Studies

Advisor: William Stephen Howard

Rebecca Cale, Associate Director, Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board

Date: 10/29/04

The approval remains in effect provided the study is conducted exactly as described in your application for review. Any additions or modifications to the project must be approved by the IRB (as an amendment) prior to implementation.
Appendix C

Certificate of Completion of Training for Human Research Subjects

Certificate of Completion

Ohio University certifies that ABDULLAHI ABDINOOR completed the computer-based training course on the Protection of Human Research Subjects.

Serial: 434736
Date: 10/17/2004

http://www.research.ohiou.edu/cbt/summary/certificate.asp
10/17/2004
Appendix D

Approval of Proposal for Dissertation

OFFICE OF GRADUATE STUDIES
College of Education
Ohio University
Athena OH 45701

APPROVAL OF PROPOSAL FOR DISSERTATION

Student's Name: Abdullahi A. Abdiwahab
Department: Counseling and Higher Education, Educational Studies, Teacher Education

Title of Proposal: Educating Children in a Time of War: Sexual Schools since State Collapse

Dissertation Director: [Signature]
Date: 11-08-04

Signature of the Chairperson of the Dissertation Committee: [Signature]
Date: 11-08-04

Signature of Committee Member: [Signature]
Date: 11-08-04

Signature of Committee Member: [Signature]
Date: 11-08-04

Signature of Committee Member: [Signature]
Date: 11-08-04

Signature of Committee Member: [Signature]
Date: [Signature]

Signature of the Dean's Representative: [Signature]
Date: [Signature]

Does this research involve human subjects? Yes No

If yes, the proposal has been approved by the Institutional Review Board of Ohio University. (The approval letter is attached.)

Signature-Chair, Dissertation Committee: [Signature]
Date: 12/1/04

Copy of proposal filed with the Office of Graduate Studies, Education

GRADUATE STUDIES
DEC - 2 - 2004
EDUCATION
Appendix E

Samples of Interview Questions

My interviews were guided by these questions and supported by many other follow-up questions.

1. How do you see the way education is progressing in Somali today, compared to the situation in the past when there was a state?

2. Tell me how the current schools were first started after the destruction of education system in Somalia when the state collapsed in 1991?

3. Based on your experience, what do you think are the most pressing issues with regard to the current situation of education in Somalia and what are some of the achievements made/setbacks encountered?

4. Based on your experience, what factors do you think are contributing to or hampering the success of education under the present-day circumstances?

5. What kind of education systems are emerging after the destruction of the old system during the civil war?

6. How has the community managed so far to cope with the situation of statelessness and how it is trying to improve? In your view, how is the community fairing in the absence of the state?

7. The society had traditionally viewed formal education as the responsibility of the state. Do you think they have now assumed that responsibility now that there is no state?

8. Traditionally, community support is given to Islamic *Quranic* education which was limited in resources. Do you think this support is being or can be extended to formal education and how?
9. Since the collapse of the state, the community is increasingly willing to contribute to formal education, thereby conceptually shifting from associating formal education with the state to taking ownership of it, as was the case with informal education, how far do you agree or disagree with this statement and why?

10. Support for the rehabilitation of educational infrastructure during the early years of relief operation mainly came from international aid agencies, supported by local non-governmental organizations, NGOs. Is the situation still the same or are the local communities and business peoples taking responsibility for supporting education?

11. Based on your experience, are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of education in the country and what is your view of any specifics of current practices of education?

12. What do you think is the role of education in rehabilitation of the society?

13. What do you think would be the role of any future state in financing or in anyway managing schools?

14. What is the role of those educated in these schools in their society? What do they do? What options are open for them?
Appendix F

Samples of Interview Transcripts

The following are the transcripts of three sample interviews I selected out of 13 interviews I conducted in the course of the study.

Farah Abdulqadir, Somali Institute for Management and Administration Development, SIMAD, Mogadishu

Q. 1. Can you give me an idea of how the process of education restarted following the collapse of the state in Somalia?

A. First of all, we can say that state ownership of education started during the Revolution [Siyad Barre Regime]. This eliminated privately ownership of educational institutions, whether by individuals or organizations. In late 1980s, the state allowed again private educational institutions to be operated but the state collapsed before private education was established very well. The collapse also meant that education is one of the public services that are waiting for the state to provide. This is because the civil war and subsequent displacement and famine did not allow the society which was preoccupied with seemingly more urgent emergencies to think of education. Therefore, early thinking of the current education began in 1992. It all started in different ways. Some schools started when some of the relief agencies began to include education in their relief work. Others were started by businesspeople or private individuals who set up private education of their own. The education that was started by relief agencies largely represented the formal education that was previously provided by the state. However, it was not organized or planned. Some of them might have been utilizing state facilities but there was no long term vision or plan as to how long the education will need to be managed this way. It was just part of the relief efforts and it was generally hoped that soon,
perhaps in few months, the political reconciliation would succeed and re-establish the state which would assume the responsibility for education.

Another factor that encouraged the establishment of schools was the coming of UNOSOM (the UN intervention in 1992), because the war had subsided and people began to come back to the cities. Also, many NGOs were formed giving many people a way of earning a living. Some of these NGOs were working in the education sector. There was even a program set up in 1993-1994 by WFP (World Food Program) known as Food for Work, where teachers were given food in exchange for teaching. During this period, over 400 schools were reported to have been established in Mogadishu alone, whereas the number of schools in Mogadishu before the collapse of the state was less than a hundred. I believe that if UNOSOM operated schools or re-started all public services, people would have managed to continue running them. The situation would have been much better and state institutions would have been re-established. Then, UNOSOM and all international forces left. As a result, the field was left only for those who really wanted to work in education. Most of these people were individuals who had worked previously in education, as teachers or educational leaders or managers. So, this was the only way open for them to earn a living. By 1996 and 1997, there emerged well-organized schools with different levels of education, following the usual system of education, taught and run by qualified teachers and trusted and paid for by parents.

By 1998, students began to graduate from secondary schools. For these students who are graduating from secondary schools, the issue was now beyond the school, because schools can only give education. Students needed to be assessed, get certificates and pursue further education. This was beyond the capacity of the school and the
organization that supported it. It was then that the current regulatory movement began in order to reorganize education, such as the educational umbrella organization, FPENS, (Formal Private Educational Network in Somalia) which was set up to provide a service different from the school. Education needed more than what was been done in schools, such as the relations between neighboring schools, higher education institutions or job markets where the student would go after graduation, the issue of equivalence of certificates, and teacher training. At the same, it was clear that it was impossible that all Somali students would go abroad to pursue further education. There were many Somali graduates from local universities, as well as from abroad, who came together and made concerted efforts to establish institutions of higher learning in the country.

SIMAD (Somali Institute for Management & Administration Development) is one of few institutions of higher learning which was established to provide Somali students with the opportunity to get higher education. SIMAD was set up to give Somali students a professional training and prepare them for the job market, where there are increasingly private firms which require professional management skills in their jobs. The initially short training period which was two years was also meant to quickly produce skilled manpower for the market.

This is, generally, how the education system that we are involved in had started in the beginning and later evolved. By the end of 1990s and early this century, education had increasingly become a private enterprise, whereas earlier the state was expected to provide everything, now nothing is expected of it. Even when the state comes private education will still be stronger than the state-run education and this trend is getting stronger and stronger and is set to continue. It is worth noting that not all schools are
members of the educational networks or umbrella organizations. While majority of them are members, there are those that are not.

Q. 2. Based on your experience, what are the most important issues affecting education in Somalia today, what are some of the achievements and setbacks?

A. First of all, the biggest problem facing the current education is that only a limited number of student benefits from it and close to 90% of school age children are not going to school. Therefore, when the state is reestablished and, leaving the current schools aside, starts setting up new schools for the majority of children who are not currently going to school, I’m sure a better educational system would be put in place. So, the present education is never an alternative to the state-run education, because this private education will never give equal access to all the people due to the fact that it is by nature and material constraint limited and the people cannot afford to pay the cost.

If I come back to the question as to what will happen to the current schools when there is a state, I think different possibilities can be expected. Some of those individuals who are currently employed in the education sector might leave education and take up other jobs in different sectors if there are any, because among school teachers are professionals who are otherwise qualified in others fields, such as engineering, medicine and biochemical industries. These professionals are teaching only because there are no other ways of earning a living. They may just quit teaching. Similarly, those humanitarian agencies that are involved in providing education are not likely to remain so when there is a state that is capable of providing educational services. They might hand over the educational facilities to the state and concentrate on other services or leave the country. Also, those educators who are currently running schools at the local or district levels or
involved in education in any form or shape, such as those in the educational networks, are likely to leave their present jobs to get better positions in the educational administration or ministry of education when there is a state. However, there is no doubt in my mind that many people and many private schools will still operate the way they are today or even after the coming of the state. This will be a private education run by professional educators. There will also be a new interest in private education by individuals from abroad or by business people who feel at the moment that the security atmosphere is not suitable for investing in education and would jump in to invest in private education when there is a state and security. Similarly, there are going to be a variety of new international organizations, institutions and universities which will try to attract Somali students from the diaspora who would require an education similar to the one that they are used to in those countries they come from when there is state and stability. So, there will be a new private education that would cater for the needs of the children of the large Somali communities in the diaspora.

Q. 3. Do the Somali business people or communities in the diaspora contribute to the setting up or financing schools in the country?

A. The role of the Somalis in the diaspora now appears to be increasing compared to past. There are few schools in certain regions which have been set up with the support of members of the community who live in the diaspora who would raise funds for that purpose. Communities have begun competing in raising money for school construction, whereas in the past they would compete in purchasing battlewagons (the so-called technicals) to be used in the civil war. The role of business people 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. This is very different from the health sector which generates enough money to sustain itself and make profit from, because due to the emergency nature of illness, patients have no option but to pay doctors or hospitals whatever it takes.

Q. 4. What do you think will be the emerging education system in the country following the destruction of the old system?

A. Actually, we cannot say the current system has started from scratch, because many of the people involved were part of the old system as teachers and administrators. Also, innovative ideas are limited among Somalis and as I said earlier, most of the current schools were not planned to last this long and to this level. Many people thought it would be temporary it is until taken over by the state. Some of the schools were started with outside support. I believe that if there is a change in the society and political system, there will be a change in education accordingly. The change will be part of the political system. If the state is a democratic with liberal economy where individuals are respected for their skills, then education is likely to be stronger or become a well valued service that attracts everybody but if the political system continues to reward people because of their affiliation to certain sections of the society, the way it is now, it will have impact on education as well.

There will also be a major change in people’s attitude towards education, especially parental value and prioritization of their children’s education. Today, we hear some people lament the monthly ten dollar school fees, because according to them, education should be free and charging fees is unheard of and amounts to extortion. This is despite the fact that the parent pays ten dollars or more monthly as telephone bill and
does not see it as extortion. So, there will be a major change in parental attitude towards education and where they put school in the family priority list. However, it appears to me that in the next five to ten years education would not get the amount of attention that is accorded to the issue of reconciliation, disarmament or political power sharing. This might be because of the type of political leadership, special circumstances in the country or the international agendas that have a say in Somalia. A great deal of international efforts and resources might have been spent in these issues but education is likely to be sidelined or made to wait for a more opportune moment. So, the future political outlook shows that there will be a strong and valuable private education.

Q. 5. Do you think the Somali community has accepted paying fees as a fact?

A. It has become part of the culture. I remember in the late 1992 when we were starting to set up schools we used to ask parents to bring their children but they used to have a big doubt about whether education can be restarted and would not bring their children. Therefore, parents were forced to bring their children to enroll in school in order to get food rations from relief agencies. The first to enroll used to be given food, clothes and then books. Then, there came a time when parents were told to come with their children’s clothes and books and then the food was stopped. Finally, the time has come when parents were told to pay school fees for the education of their children. Payment of school fees has passed different stages but it is now part of the school culture and although it was problematic in the beginning, many people have understood and accepted it now.

Parents are prepared to pay for the education of their children. This is clear from the fact that there different fee structures, there are schools that charge five dollars and those that charge 15 dollars. Parents send their children to both categories of schools and
there are parents who like them and ready to pay for their services, despite being relatively expensive, because they trust them or due to other qualities. It is worth reminding here that we are talking about the very few people who can afford to pay school fees. Those who cannot afford have to wait for the free education culture that suits them well, if and when it comes. When free education culture comes, it will negatively impact on the private education that has now become established. Some 40% of the students now enrolled in private schools might move to the public schools that will provide free education but I have no doubt that the remaining 60% of the students will develop increased conscience and respect for private education and pay a higher school fees than they do today.

Q. 6. Do parents or community at large care about the schooling of their children and the school curriculum?

A. Compared to the time of the state, it appears that parents do care about the education of their children. However, this care is superficial and it is due to the fact that since they pay money as school fees they think that in order to get value for their money their children have a right to spend school hours learning in school and not be absent. They feel that if their children are not in school it will amount to wasting the money they spent on school fees, just like purchasing a ticket to a movie theatre and not watching the show. So, parents do really care about their children’s education and their class attendance but very few of them care about the contents of education given to the students. This is attributable to the parents’ awareness about the whole issue of education. For example, if you call parents to the school to tell them about their children’s performance they get surprised and would say: did you call us for this only? We had important matters to
attend to. They are only used to be summoned for matters related to discipline or truancy of their children.

Q. 7. Is there a problem associated with the lack of unified curriculum in the country? How do you reconcile private education with the call for a unified curriculum?

A. One of the underlying reasons why the network (FPENS) was formed is the fact that we provide service that people buy from us and this service is value-laden and will bring about a change to the minds of the students who undergo training in our schools. This change would not be limited to the current lives of the students only. Rather, it would transcend to the rest of their lives and the people around them. A very important question to ask is who has the right to mold the minds of these students and make them the way he/she thinks fit and what could be the consequences if the methods used were wrong?

Different societies would answer this question differently. Since there are no elected or appointed public officials in Somalia who would formulate curriculum based on agreed upon educational policy, there must be some one who performs that function. Therefore, the network represents “legitimacy” in education policy formulation. It was formed when intellectuals came together and agreed to base the process of education on some agreed upon guidelines. Whether these intellectuals were elected or appointed is another matter altogether. The important fact is that they are Somali intellectuals who volunteered to do the job for now.

Actually, there are different curricula as far as textbooks are concerned. The network (FPENS) tried to unify these curricula as far as cross contents are concerned and also the subjects that are taught to the students and the hours of each subject. For example, a student taking physics in Form One (ninth grade) will take electricity, light,
power, gravity etc. But the factual question is which books to use. Since there are no books that are written and published in the country, schools and teachers would use whatever books they can lay their hands onto, so long as they satisfy the basics. Right now, we are at a stage whereby in Arabic language medium secondary schools, chapters and concepts are taken from textbooks from various Arab countries to make them a book to be used in classroom teaching for different subjects. I think the biggest problem is the standards, because there is no one that sets the standard. So, problems arise from student assessment and who sets the questions in the examinations.

When the state comes, the most important question to ask after the question of legitimacy is the standard. Then, when private schools are established along with public schools, the issue of curriculum would not be a big problem, because there will always be guidelines and benchmarks upon which the educational policy is based. Above that, if anyone wants to add some extra elements, such teaching hours, subjects etc., they would be free to do so. Essentially, curriculum is based on ideology but what is happening in Somalia has nothing to do with ideology. It is the absence of state authority. When the state authority comes back, it will have the right to question why was its authority usurped or why were such and such elements added or not added to the curriculum.

Q. 8. How do you think today’s education contributes to the rehabilitation of the country?
A. This is the most visible aspect. Education is beneficial to the society compared to when there is no education at all. First of all, it creates security. It is generally easy for people to travel, visit each other and develop relations in communities where there are schools and this contributes to security. Education also creates jobs to many people, such as teachers and other staff in schools. For example, it has been observed that when
Schools are closed public transport bus operators who ferry students to and from schools become out of job, because in Mogadishu alone there are nearly 40,000 or 50,000 students who travel by that means daily. Similarly, the uniforms and textbooks used by students are supplied by business people. The same thing is true about chairs, blackboards and other school fittings. All these are economic stimulants and people would try to do everything possible to prevent any disruption of any of the services, because if there is any disruption of any of them, schools will be closed and if schools are closed parents cannot keep their children. Many Somali parents send their kids to school because they cannot handle them at home. Generally speaking, there are no security incidents or clashes in schools which are one of the places where people from different clans come together, while it is quite possible that there are clashes in their respective localities. This is an indication of how schools contribute to the general security. It also means that students, teachers and other school staff would not take part in the civil war, whether at home or in school. So, these thousands of students have been saved from the war by going to school, whereas they would tell you that they lost parents, brother, sister or other family members in the war.

Q. 9. Is the current education sustainable?
A. Actually, this is a question that we ask ourselves very often. It is quite possible that the state might come too late or never come at all but the important thing is the security issue. If there is no security, by whatever means, there will be no education, because if there is security there will be job opportunities and people can only support education when there are opportunities for job. If there are no opportunities for job and many more students keep on graduating from schools and universities, students and parents will question the
reason for going to school. I have no doubt that this will negatively impact on education and its development. The situation at the moment is that there are few chances of employment, those few that are there are owned by few families, no big industries, no international trade or international corporations in the country. The education that is there is general and not technical or skill-based. Chances of traveling abroad for Somalis are becoming slimmer, because their passport is not valid for travel to most countries. All these, if a solution is not found for them, will have a negative impact on education.

Q. 10. How do you compare the current systems of education and schools to the past in terms of quality of education?

A. Education in Somalia has gone through different stages but let’s just take, as a comparison, the last stage of the state which was the Revolution (1969-1991). The question to ask first is what is the standard of quality? Quality of education can mean preparing people for jobs, relevance to the national goals or leading to personal aspirations that one can achieve in lifetime. Even when there was a state, education was not enough to give students sufficient qualification for jobs, was not relevant to national goals by instilling patriotism in students and could not make individuals achieve personal aspirations. University graduates often ended up in the street engaged in a variety of vending activities to earn a living. The current education is more limited in scope and there are fewer graduates being produced compared to the time of the state. This small number is easier to be absorbed into the local market but the situation will change and will become similar to the earlier time when the number of graduates increased.

If the quality is whether or not students can compete in the market or can be successful in higher education in foreign universities, many Somali students get admitted
into foreign universities and compete with other students. Some of them are of very high academic standing and are among the top students, especially our students in Sudan. In the final analysis, the question comes to what is the measurement of quality of education. If the benchmark is the knowledge acquired by the students, there are schools in the country which provide students with education that allows them to compete in the job market or pursue further education here or elsewhere.

Q. 11. What is your view of the future? Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of education if the current statelessness continues for some time to come?

A. I believe that unless there is a state, educational access will never reach the desired level but steps can be taken to increase it and that should be done by the whole world. Somalia is signatory to the Education For All convention and until all Somali children are given equal access to education, the world will not achieve these goals, unless Somalia is thrown out of the world. So, educators alone should not be expected to address and solve the problem of access. This should be addressed by all sections of the society, such as business people, cultural and religious leaders and political factional leaders to find a mechanism to solve it. Some people blame the lack of access of many Somali children on the private education and school fees. School fees cannot be solved by teachers. It is a matter for the society to handle. The issue is not that there is or there is no money. There are no enough schools, and there are no trained teachers which is more difficult to accomplish.
Abdiraman Sheikh Mahmud, Hamar Boarding & Kindergarten School, Mogadishu

Q. 1. First of all, can you tell more about how this school was started?

A. This school was opened in 1999 by joint efforts of former Somali teachers. Back then; this site was a refugee camp for internally-displaced people (IDPs). After coming together, those teachers thought about what to do with this site. They suggested pulling their resources together, clearing the site, renovating it and establishing a school here. That was how Hamar Boarding School was started. In fact, we started the school with 80 students. Thank God, the school is completing its sixth school year, 2004/2005. Today, we have 1,707 students, 1072 boys and 635 girls.

The goals for which the school was established was to create jobs for unemployed Somali teachers and at the same time give a chance to get education to Somali children who have been without schooling since the outbreak of the civil war. Before the civil war, education was guaranteed by the state and was free but since the civil war the only functioning schools are private schools. By teaching, teachers will have a chance of paying back the taxpayers’ money that they were educated on and at the same time get decent jobs to earn a living. That was how we started this school. By using a variety of strategies, we managed to clear the site off the people who were occupying it. Then, Hamar Boarding School and its teachers began the task of finding out how to renovate it. We started with 10 classrooms. Thank God, today we have 38 classrooms. The school consists of two major sections according to its architectural design. It was designed as a day school. So, one of the sections is the day school. It operates on a double shift basis and students come either in the morning or in the afternoon shifts. Students come from their homes using school buses. The school has seven buses which are used for students’
transportation. The other section is the boarding section. We have about 312 students in this section. These students came from all corners of Somalia. One of the achievements of Hamar Boarding School is that students from all corners of the country are brought to us and, by Grace of God; we succeed in discharging this trust of their parents in us by keeping them safe and giving them education. There are even parents who bring their children to us from abroad. These parents, whom we did not meet in person and only came to know them through email, direct their children to us and send us the school fees through Hawala money transfer companies. Due to this trust, children from every part of Mogadishu are brought to us, whereas these parts of the city were not open to each other before. Similarly, Somalia was torn apart by the civil war but children from all corners of the country have been brought to us and we keep them here. This is an indication that education has created integration and trust among the community.

This is the boarding section. The education that we have here in this school starts from pre-schooling or kindergarten section. Then, there is the primary section, lower and upper primary. Finally, we have the secondary section. Since there is no central government in the country, Hamar Boarding School uses the Kenyan school curriculum. The language of instruction is English for all subjects, except the Islamic Religious Education, the Arabic Language which are instructed in Arabic and the Somali Language and Literature which is instructed in Somali. Because there is no unified curriculum and no central authority that controls education, there are different curricula in Somalia today and every school or organization adopted the curriculum that they chose or thought appropriate for their interests. We have students of varying age groups, ranging from four-year olds up to 18-year olds. The school has passed many stages of development and
in most cases it sustained itself, although there were organizations that helped us with some very important assistance and we are grateful for that, such as Africa Muslims Agency which implemented three major projects for us. It constructed for us a mosque that can accommodate 400 students inside the school compound, so that people can pray because they are Muslims. It helped us with a well in the compound. It also built for us a bakery that is meant to supply bread to the boarding section. There also are other agencies that helped us, such as UN refugee agency UNHCR which constructed a water tank for us and three new classrooms. UNICEF helped renovate two classrooms for us and gave us school supplies, such as chalks etc. Otherwise, the school is sustained and maintained with the school fees that parents pay. We are able to run the school with the money generated by school through that source and the school is sustainable.

Q. 2. What was the role of teachers or the local community in establishing the school?

A. The school was set up by Somali teachers who used to work in the Ministry of Education, regardless of their region of origin. We all came together and set up the school. You can see our administration is composed of all Somalis from all parts of the country. The only requirement is that the prospective teacher should have worked in the Ministry of education as a teacher, should have a university degree from Lafoole College of Education and be of sound moral character, because teachers are role models for students.

Q. 3. You said this site was previously occupied by refugees or displaced people, is it a state property or privately owned?

A. This site that is currently used by Hamar Boarding and Kindergarten School is a state property. It used to belong to the former Ministry of Education and before the state
collapse it used to be a secondary school known as Hamar Secondary School. Following the civil war, former schools in Mogadishu have been appropriated and used as garages or houses, turned into garbage dumping grounds or refugee camps. We are using it for the best use and have renovated it for the benefit of Somali students. There are about 1,700 students who go to school here and there 90 staff members, including 35 teachers. This shows that Hamar Boarding School has created many jobs.

Q. 4. Based on your experience, what are the most important issues affecting education in Somalia today, what are some of the achievements and setbacks?

A. We can say for sure that education today is qualitatively better than ever before, especially here in Mogadishu where many children go to school every morning. This is despite the economic hardship the society is facing. Most people, especially the poor, do not afford to pay the cost of education. Some statistics show that only about 10 to 15 per cent of school age children go to school. This is one of the reasons why state is needed to provide chances of going to school to other children. However, since education is not free quality of education is stronger today, because teachers are accountable for their performance, whereas they were not answerable during the time of the state. We hope the future would even be better, but state intervention is inevitable for any lasting development, because the state would cater for the poorer families who are the majority of the people.

Q. 5. How much do you charge as school fees?

A. Hamar Boarding School charges ten dollars for all primary school grades and 14 dollars for secondary schools per month. We charge 35 dollars for the boarding section. This charge includes all boarding and lodging expenses, such as breakfast, lunch and
dinner and use of other school facilities. The education we offer also include Islamic education in the form of a Quranic *dugsi* Islamic school inside the school.

Q. 6. Can you give a description of the emerging system of education in Somalia, since the old system has been destroyed?

A. Education in the country today is all private. The main problem with this is that there is no unified curriculum and everybody adopted the curriculum of the country they chose. This is in my view the biggest obstacle facing the Somali education today. Personally as a teacher, I believe important and tangible achievements have been made in the last few years, especially in Mogadishu region where there new universities, private institutes and all sorts of schools and children can learn in many languages. I see a good future for education. There have been some positive developments in the post civil war era. For example, school week used to be six days, Friday being the only off day, today it is only five days, both Thursday and Friday are off days. This change came as a result of outside influence.

Q. 7. Why do you think the Somali community was able to cope with the problem of the war and establish schools in the absence of the state?

A. Following the civil war, the people saw that there was no state that is forthcoming and 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 (*Haddi fiqqi la waayo ma loo fadhinaa?*). As there are private business enterprises, private telecommunication and hospitals, education too has become just one of the private sectors that have emerged following the collapse of the state to provide those services that were previously provided by the state. Like any other enterprise in the
private sector, education has multiple objectives. It aims to educate children and at the same time create jobs for teachers and staff members and make profit for investors. So, all investors whether in telecommunications or education serve the community and make profits out of their investment. So, life without a state has been experimented in Mogadishu and can actually be seen today that it is, indeed, possible.

Q. 8. Do you think the distinction between community ownership of traditional Quranic education (dugsi) and state ownership of modern education is still there or the community has now taken ownership of both, since there is no state?

A. The education that the Somali society really believes in is the Quranic education (dugsi). Almost all Somali parents, about 90 per cent of them, take their children to the Quranic dugsi schools and it is only when the children complete the Quranic education that they are taken to the modern school. This is a belief by the Somali society. Parents also pay fees in this type of education. Modern schools in Mogadishu are all privately owned, except few schools supported by some aid agencies, such World Concern and IDA. So the two types of education are separately run.

Q. 9. What is the role of parents or community in running these private schools, such as yours? Do they care about the curriculum, for instance?

A. They have a role to play. There is a parents committee that is 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, on cases of conflict resolution among students and families. They are also consulted on end of the
year projects that need to done. Nonetheless, most of the day-to-day running of the school is done by the administration.

Q. 10. What is the role of international aid agencies in establishing and managing education in the country?

A. Many aid agencies came and supported some schools. Most of these agencies were Arab aid agencies, such as Al-Haramayn Foundation and Dubai Organization which started schools in Mogadishu and throughout the country. Initially, aid agencies came to deliver relief supplies. Most of those schools were Arabic medium. It is only since 2000 that privately owned schools have been set up by individuals who made the schools their profession. So, there were schools established by aid agencies and those private schools that were set by individuals. Initially, those established by aid agencies were more but now it seems the society has taken the responsibility and there are few or no aid agencies that are active in the field of education in the country. Today’s schools are based on self-reliance and are mainly managed with the fees paid by the students or their parents. For example, at Hamar Boarding School we cover 100% of the management coast with the revenue it generates every month and, apart from some support in the form of projects, we don’t get any financial help at all.

Q. 11. Do the Somali businesspeople support education in any way? Do they take part in financing schools? Did you ask them to contribute? What is their response?

A. This is 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. If you ask them to organize fundraising to construct classrooms, as we did on more than one occasion, no would trust you. It is not in the Somali culture. They can easily understand clan
mobilization for the purpose of war and not for the public interest. It only now that few of
them are beginning to learn.

Q. 12. Based on your experience and involvement in education, are you optimistic or
pessimistic about the future of education in the country, whether or not there is a state?
A. I am really optimistic and can foresee a very bright future when everything becomes
private. Culturally, the Somali society can do better when everything is private. People
care about and protect their private property which would make it more sustainable but
Somalis don’t care about any commonly owned property. I hope the private education
would lead Somalia into progress and development.

Q. 13. What is the role that education can play in rehabilitating the society following the
destructive civil war?
A. Very much so, very much so. Education has an important role to play in the
reconstruction and integration of the society, because children from different regions or
clans come together to the school and become friends. They in turn take their friendship
back home. In this way, whole families and localities are connected and attracted to one
another and love, instead of hatred, is thus created. I believe education is one of the main
factors that contribute to the integration and trust building in the society, because
education has rearing and personality building components. Education has a big role in
saving and rehabilitating the society, because a youth pulled out of militia and gangster
life in the street and educated is likely to influence and attract others into school. So, we
can say education is the key to social integration and national reconstruction.
**Sheikh Omar, Buulow Primary School, Hudur**

Q. 1. Can you tell me how education started in this town after the collapse of the old system?

A. Following the collapse of the state, since there was no one taking care of education, teachers organized themselves, those who could do it at the time, and opened the school. It all started like that.

Q. 2. In your opinion, what are some of the successes achieved in education and some of the failures?

A. Since there is no state and the people in this region are behind in education, there are few successes. However, some of the achievements are the fact that we managed to give chance to go to school to some of the children who would not have managed to go to school. Otherwise, we have not yet achieved what we intended to, because of economic and other constraints. But we feel that the fact that the education we started still going on and did not stopped is in itself an achievement.

Q. 3. What were some of the reasons and factors that helped you achieve these successes?

A. Some aid agencies used to give seminars and training to teachers. From 1994, the food for work program was initiated by WFP to give some small assistance to teachers but this program later stopped.

Q. 4. What are some of the persisting problems?

A. One of the most pressing problems is the economic problem, because teachers have their own financial difficulties to deal with. It would be hard for teachers with these problems to discharge their duties. Also, another serious problem is that there are no
educational facilities and teaching aids at all, because there was nothing left from the destruction and all that is there was put together by the teachers.

Q. 5. How would you describe the educational system that has emerged following the destruction of the old systems?

A. We are following the old curriculum in our teaching and planning. Since there is no state and no security, I believe 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. Therefore, it is possible that everything would stop.

Q. 6. Since the old system has collapsed, how did you managed to come up with another curriculum? Did you receive support from international aid agencies? Do parents have a say in what is being taught in the school? Do they care about what curriculum is being implemented?

A. We managed to get textbooks of the old curriculum. Some UN agencies published these textbooks. There books which were in Somali have been translated into Arabic. The society only cares about what they think is important today. For example, all they are interested is if the school teaches English language or not, because English is perceived to be the key to success and good jobs. It is interesting to note that there are private English language tutoring classes where students pay instructors 30,000 shillings per month whereas teachers in regular schools are struggling to be paid 20,000 shilling per month. This is all related to the current circumstances and job market where those who can speak some English might get employed by one of the aid agencies.
Q. 7. Islamic education in the traditional *dugi* system used to be managed by the community whereas modern education was the prerogative of the state. Is the situation still the same?

A. It is only teachers that are struggling to set up schools. Islamic education was and still is cared and paid for by the community. There is no such self consciousness by the community to held modern education. It is only when teachers set up schools students go there. The society is as if it is waiting for the state to come and establish schools again. We even tried to form parents and teachers association so that they are aware of what we are doing and what expenses are to be paid by them. Unfortunately, we could not even convince them to come to meetings. So, it seems that the society is waiting for the state to establish schools for them, especially in this region.

Q. 8. Traditionally, most parents or the community in general used to not care about education and schools. Do you think the situation is changing now or will change in the future?

A. The root of the problem was that education was free and the state used to provide for everything. Therefore, it become very difficult for the society that is used to that system to pay school fees. However, 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. That is why some aid agencies are asking the community to contribute to the reconstruction cost of schools, so that they could protect them from looting in future. Generally, state properties were the target of looting and destruction and if the community contributes in building or reconstructing a school they will protect it.
Q. 9. It is said that the current education was established by international aid agencies or charities. Is it still under their control or is it now owned by the community?
A. There are no aid agencies involved in education here but it was originally established by agencies since the society did not have anything following the state collapse and civil war. This is particularly true in the Mogadishu area and less so here in this region.

Islamic aid agencies used to be very active by providing free education in Arabic and paying teachers’ salaries. Even then, they used to advise the community to own and run the schools by themselves, because continued funding by the aid agencies is not tenable. There were also some contributions by some Somali communities abroad in building schools in some regions. Here in this region, we did not have schools that were initially established by agencies. No Islamic aid agency came here, except some in Baidoa.

Q. 10. Do the local Somali business people contribute to the establishment of education in the region? Did you ask them to contribute? Do you think they are mature enough for these issues?
A. We tried on many occasions to ask them for contribution but they are not forthcoming, even though their own children go to the school and they are members in parents association that we formed. They do not understand the reasons why they should contribute their money in rebuilding a government school.

Q. 11. Generally, what is the role that education could play in saving the community from the effects of the civil war?
A. The fact is that the mayhem that happened to Somalia was due to ignorance and most of those who took part in acts of destruction are people from the countryside with no education. Some of the militia leaders who led armed factions in the civil war exhibited
opposition to education and warned their militiamen against allowing educated people to
take leadership positions in the country. So, it is clear that education is important in
saving the society from the current confusion and the higher the level of education in a
community the more achievement it makes in development and progress.

Q. 12. What role could students play in the society when they leave school? What
opportunities are open for them?

A. Certainly, they would not go back to the street, take up guns and join militias. To the
contrary, they are expected to be role models for the militiamen of their age to abandon
that habit and instead go to school. Having tasted the peaceful life of school environment,
the current students would only want to proceed further in their education and
constructive life in the society.

Q. 13. Are you optimistic or pessimistic about the future of education in the country if
there is no state is forthcoming soon?

A. Different regions have different prospects if the state does not come. Some regions,
such as Mogadishu and regions with functioning administrations are well off and can as
well survive without the state as they have managed so far with some well-established
schools and universities. In these regions, Bay & Bakool, unless there are concerted
efforts by educators from the region with outside financial help, current education cannot
be sustained without the state. More qualified educators are needed to be recruited to help
establish and manage schools, especially beyond elementary level. There are problems
here in these regions. However, generally-speaking, education in Somalia will progress
with or without the state.
Appendix G

Some Pictures From The Field

Classroom (boys)
Classroom (boys & girls)

SIMAD preparatory class (men & women)
Morning Assembly at
Ahmed Gurey Secondary School

SIMAD computer lab
Al-Fajr School

Focus Group Discussion 1
Focus Group Discussion 2