



Governance Brief 02

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Summary

In October 2018, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education of the Federal Government of Somalia took over the management of 24 public schools in Mogadishu. The government recruited and directly pays teachers and no tuition fee is collected from students at all grades (1-12). The 24 schools are the first federal government-run schools in Somalia since the state collapse in 1991. This governance brief is based on school visits and interviews with different stakeholders in Mogadishu. It examines students, teachers, payment processes, curriculum, and the challenges schools face. It concludes with policy options and recommendations.

About Somali Public Agenda

Somali Public Agenda is a non-profit public policy and administration research organization based in Mogadishu. Its aim is to advance understanding and improvement of public administration and public services in Somalia through evidence-based research and analysis.

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Examining public schools in Mogadishu

Background

Public schools were among the state institutions destroyed after the toppling of the military government in 1991. In the mid-1990s, the process of reconstruction of schools started in the absence of a functioning central government (Cassanelli & Abdikadir, 2008). Since then, a plethora of private schools was opened across Somalia. These schools provided much-needed primary and secondary education to the young children in the country's troubled and violent cities.

Somalia's first transitional government was established in the year 2000 in Djibouti after a decade of chaos and lawlessness. It failed to establish itself and operate in the country. Two other fragile transitional governments followed (2004 and 2009 respectively). The first non-transitional federal government was established in Mogadishu in September 2012 when a federal parliament elected a prominent civil society member Hassan Sheikh Mohamud as Somalia's head of state. Despite these state-building efforts, the subsequent governments did not perform well in the education sector. Private schools and umbrella organizations were dominant and remain the main providers of basic, secondary and tertiary education in Somalia.

However, the federal government with the support of a number of international agencies started the Go-to-School initiative in 2013 with the aim to give access to education to one million children and adults in Somalia within three years (Federal Government of Somalia & UNICEF, 2013). The project failed to achieve its ambitious goals especially in the southern and central regions. Teachers were poorly paid, and the targeted students were not reached.

More recently, the incumbent federal government started efforts to take over a number of public schools in Mogadishu. Some international donors and countries supported the reconstruction of a number of public schools. Despite the fact that 45 percent of the annual budget is contributed by international donors, the government has increased its budget allocation in the education sector to a record \$16 million in 2019, compared to \$8 million the previous year (Federal Republic of Somalia, 2019). The Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education receives \$10.4 million budget in 2019, and a percentage of this fund goes to government-run public schools (Somali Public Agenda, 2019).

In October 2018, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education took over the management of 24 public schools in Mogadishu. Somali Public Agenda examined the state of government-run schools in Mogadishu. Between 9th February and 10th April 2019, researchers visited six of the 24 schools in Mogadishu and interviewed a total of 22 key informants including school administrations, teachers, students, department directors at the Ministry of Education who have a direct role in the planning, management, and supervision of the public schools in Mogadishu, as well as educational experts and university lecturers.

Public schools in Mogadishu

Since October 2018, Somalia's Ministry of Education has been directly managing 24 public schools in Mogadishu. Fourteen of the 24 public schools were operating partially under government authority and were part of the Go-to-School initiative. These schools used to receive financial support from a number of international organizations.

There is no integrated national curriculum in Somalia. Government-run public schools use the government curriculum in some levels. Last year, the Ministry of Education finalized the grade 1 to 4 curriculum and distributed textbooks to elementary level students. All 24 public schools use the government curriculum in the elementary classes.

However, there is no national curriculum at the intermediate level. There are various curriculums taught in intermediate classes (5-8). Most of the public schools teach UNESCO prepared or Kenyan curriculums. As stated by the Ministry of Education officers interviewed, the intermediate curriculum is expected to be prepared by the end of April 2019 and the plan is to use the new curriculum for the 2019/2020 academic year. This will be a great milestone.

Similarly, there is curriculum chaos at the secondary level. However, there is a unified syllabus used by schools in Benadir, Jubaland, SouthWest, Galmudug, and Hirshabelle. This syllabus (9-12) has been used since 2014. The federal government has been able to organize national examinations for secondary school leaving students since 2015 as a result of the high school grade syllabus distributed to all secondary schools. The Ministry of Education envisages to finalize and launch a national secondary curriculum by 2020.

The government-run schools are free at all grades. This means the current 24 public schools in Mogadishu are the first state-run schools of its size that are free and open for all students for the first time in three decades.

Students

The total number of students attending public schools in Mogadishu is approximately 16,760 as per January 2019 government assessment. It is encouraging that close to half of the students (7,601 or 45 percent) are female while the remaining 9,159 or 55 percent are male. Some schools have a majority of female students. A school in Howlwadaag district has 540 students; 312 are female while 225 are male. Another school in Waaberi district with 712 students has almost an equal number of gender – 360 males and 352 females.

The enrollment of new students has increased rapidly. The enrollment period opened in December 2018. A school in Howlwadaag district enrolled 300 new students. 150 new students joined another school in Wadajir district. Public schools created invaluable opportunities for many students to start going to school or continue their education. However, the enrollment is an indication that a high number of

students will queue for registration in June and July this year when the new 2019/2020 academic year opens. The demand for free public education exceeds the capacity of government-run public schools that currently offer education to close to 17,000 students in Mogadishu.

The increase in school enrollment does not mean that a larger proportion of urban poor and IDPs of school age gained access to go to schools. Most of the students in the schools visited are from relatively wealthy families. This could mean that the parents and children of poor families may not be aware of free education provision. Nonetheless, offering basic education to the children of poor families who are unable to pay the tuition fee of private schools must be prioritized in the upcoming new student registrations.

Teachers

According to the latest assessment at the Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education in January this year, 735 teachers and school principals operate in the 24 public schools in Mogadishu. 525 (71 percent) are male and 210 (29 percent) are female teachers. There are an additional 200 teachers recruited by the federal government who operate in community schools in Jubaland, Southwest, Hirshabelle and Galmudug, 50 in each state. All (935 teachers) are on the government's payroll and receive salaries in their personal bank accounts. Between 30 to 40 school principals and teachers work in each school. The number depends mainly on the size and number of students attending schools. For instance, a school in Wadajir district with 1,235 students has 40 teachers and administrators, while a school in Howlwadaag district with 685 students has 30 teachers and administrators. Women have a visible role in both school management and teaching. 6 of the 24 public schools in Mogadishu have female principals. This is extremely rare in privately owned and run schools.

The recruitment process for school teachers is not uniform. There are over 200 teachers who were previously recruited for the 14 public schools that were operating under the Go-to-School initiative. There are teachers who were previously working with the additional 10 schools in Mogadishu that the government took over in October 2018 as they were operating as private schools. The latter group were asked to send their CVs and filled in a distributed form. The federal government also advertised teacher positions in 2018. Hundreds applied and entered examinations. Applicants were required to pass at least five of seven subjects. The Ministry recruited 300 new teachers. But only 100 were recruited for schools in Mogadishu. As stated above, 200 teachers were distributed to schools in four regional states namely Jubaland, SouthWest, Hirshabelle, and Galmudug. In short, although over 700 teachers in Mogadishu receive salaries from the federal government, only 100 were recruited by the Ministry of Education. Despite these different staffing processes, the recruitment of teachers is somewhat incomplete. First, teachers did not sign any contracts and don't know how long their current arrangement will last. Second, while teachers receive salaries from the government, they are not recognized as official public personnel as they were not given government ID cards.

All teachers receive an equal remuneration from the

government – \$322 monthly, after tax is deducted. The federal government pays the highest share of the salaries. However, the World Bank contributes to the salary expenses. According to officials at the Ministry of Education, about 240 teachers at public schools are paid partially (\$100) by the World Bank through the Go-to-School initiative. Therefore, some teachers receive full salary from the government while others collect salaries from two sources: Federal Government of Somalia (\$222) and the World Bank (\$100). School principals receive a \$400 monthly salary.

The salary arrangement has a number of limitations. First, the remuneration plan is that all teachers receive the same salary regardless of their qualifications and experience. Second, teachers are allowed to work one shift alone. If a teacher would like to work two shifts as common in private schools, the current arrangement does not allow to collect a double salary. Thirdly, the schools have no budget to cover the salary if it is delayed. Sometimes salaries are not paid on time. A teacher said, “We received the October 2018 salary on November 17th and the November salary in 11th December 2018.” The January salary was also paid in early March. This is a burden to many teachers with no alternative sources and who depend mainly on the school salary.

Fourth, the working hours of teachers vary. For instance, teachers in a school in Howlwadaag district receive a rest period every day and one day off per week; they are required to teach 20 periods per week. But that was not the case in schools in Wadajir, Kaaraan and Waaberi districts. Teachers complained about the lack of rest periods. This is probably the result of lack of proper distribution of teachers. It highlights the need to standardize the working hours of teachers who receive an equal salary.

Fifth, teacher absenteeism is high in some schools. School principals have no authority to deduct teacher salaries as a sanction if teachers fail to attend schools, as all salaries are received through personal bank accounts from the Ministry of Finance. Supervision and tracking of teachers working hours is limited. School principals have complained about this in monthly meetings with the Ministry of Education directors, but it is yet to be addressed. Finally, since there were no contracts signed or HR policy, and teachers are not integrated into the civil service, there are also no organized leave plans. HR issues such as sickness, maternity, paternity, and annual leave are yet to be defined.

There are noticeable differences between teachers working in public and private schools. First, the salaries public school teachers receive in one shift is higher than that of private schools. Private schools, although their salary scales vary, rarely pay \$322 to primary and secondary school teachers for a half day teaching or one shift. Second, public school teachers are not dependent on student fees, while private schools are. This means that public schools may not overfill classes while private schools do because of the nature of the business. Third, as emphasized by the teachers and students interviewed, public school

teachers discipline problematic students more effectively compared to private schools since they feel that they are not dependent on their tuition fees.

Other pressing challenges

Notwithstanding the commendable government role in managing the payment of the salaries of public-school teachers, there are a number of challenges facing the proper functioning of public schools in Mogadishu. School infrastructure (and its reconstruction) depends heavily on international donors such as the European Union (the EU logo is displayed in the schools it has supported) among many others. Toilets in some schools are insufficient and the sanitation of these facilities is poor. There remains no government budget for school infrastructure development or maintenance.

The most pressing challenge is that the government has not allocated a budget for electricity and water expenses of schools, or other recurrent costs. Schools were prohibited to collect money from students. Therefore, the burden of the electricity and water expenses fall under the school administrators and teachers who pay from their pockets, according to many teachers and school principals interviewed. The school principals who meet with the Ministry civil servants once a month have complained about this but no solution has yet materialized. Officials at the Ministry of Education interviewed had no clear approach to fix this. One officer said they want private electricity and water companies to provide these services freely to public schools. Another said that some international donors cover (or are willing to cover) the water and electricity expenses in some schools, while another interviewee said that they want the Benadir Regional Administration to pay such expenses.

Continuity and sustainability

Somalia’s national budget heavily depends on financial support from bilateral and multilateral donors. At times the salary of the security personnel and civil servants are delayed, and teachers are no different in this regard. The government may halt payment for months, and this will have an immediate impact on the quality of education as well as the teacher and student turnover. Therefore, while trying to improve the deficiencies, maintaining the current state will at least assure continuity.

Somalia has adopted a federal system of governance, but the responsibility sharing between the federal government and state and local authorities remains unclear in the provisional federal constitution. The status of Mogadishu, where the 24 public schools are located, is not yet defined and there are a number of public schools directly run by the Mogadishu Municipality. Therefore, there is no clarity over the future governance of the public schools in Mogadishu that are hitherto under the Ministry of Education’s remit. Furthermore, the capacity and institutional structure of the Benadir Regional Administration in managing public schools remain weak. The arrangement of the status of Mogadishu and the capability of the Mogadishu Municipality in managing public schools in Mogadishu could have an impact on the current management structure of public schools in the capital city in the future.

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Policy options and recommendations

The federal government may try to expand the number of public schools in Mogadishu and also replicate the initiative in regional states. However, this should be done carefully. The federal government should see the management of 24 public schools in Mogadishu as a pilot experiment and assess the current state properly before considering expansion. Many challenges remain unfixed here, relating to teacher salaries, school infrastructure, curriculum, and the payment of recurrent expenses. Private schools, which were operational for over two decades, are also prevalent in the country and give students and teachers alternative options.

First, the government must properly assess the current progress and improve on its shortcomings. Teachers are paid higher than in private schools. However, the salary has irregularities and deficiencies. Standards should be set for both the recruitment and remuneration of teachers. Equally important is to unify the working hours of teachers and supply teachers to schools proportionately. The Ministry of Education should also manage the funds from international agencies in a transparent and efficient manner. This will help gain the trust of supporting organizations, ensure the regular payment of salaries and boost the payment of recurrent costs.

Second, there is a huge number of urban poor and IDPs who are not able to pay school tuition fees. A minimum quota of newly enrolled students should be allocated for orphans, the children of the poorest local families and IDPs. Awareness raising initiatives are also necessary to highlight to these communities their rights to access free education provision. Increased school enrollment amongst urban poor and IDPs will boost the literacy and numeracy rate in Somalia and create much-needed hope for disadvantaged children.

Third, the federal government must come up with a strategy to improve school infrastructure and pay fixed expenses. A meager budget could be allocated for each school to cater for electricity and water costs, as well as sanitation and other recurrent

expenses. In the short-term, and as proposed by some school principals, each school could form a parents committee and task force and ask them to collect money among themselves and pay the electricity, water, and other recurrent expenses. This will develop a sense of community ownership and will mitigate the government concern that schools will collect unaccounted money from students/parents.

Finally, a comprehensive training scheme for teachers must be put in place. The capacity of teachers must be strengthened. This will increase the quality of students' education and achievements. Equally important is preparing HR policies for public school teachers that define and clarify annual, maternity, paternity, and sick leave arrangements. Alternatively, teachers could be integrated into the government's wider civil servant structure where grading systems and leave plans are clear.

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