# Somali Higher Education: Current State, Challenges and Opportunities as a Case Study of Somali National University

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## Abstract

The main objectives of the study were to find out the challenges and opportunities of higher education in post conflict societies for the time being as a case of Somali National University in Mogadishu, Somalia. A descriptive research design was used and the study population were Bachelor, Master, and PhD holders at Somali National University. A sample size of 25 respondents was taken. Self administered questionnaires were used to collect the data from the respondents and evaluated by utilizing descriptive statistics with the aid of SPSS. The findings discovered that higher education for the time being contributes peace building as well as good governance in post-conflict societies.

**Keywords:** Somali higher education: current state, challenges and opportunities and Somali National University

## Introduction

Higher education is education, training and research guidance that takes place after at the postsecondary level and is expected to contribute significantly to rebuilding shattered societies, also  Policymakers assert that it can heal the psychosocial wounds of war, solve youth unemployment, deliver decentralization and democracy, build peace and promote economic and social development.  The recognition that education systems are almost always complicit in conflict, that they rarely completely cease to function and that they rapidly resume operations with or without outside support as violence subsides is an important factor responsible for the growing interest in early education response (Buckland, n.d)

The recovery of social institution such as education is one of the major tasks in societies that have suffered armed conflict. Peace building represents an extraordinary set of social and political experiments focusing on the creation of politico-legal structures and development projects. Very often peace process is focused on rebuilding basic education with little focus on higher education that require long time frames and extended engagement with local community and social institutions (Nukuitu, 2003)

The higher education sector in Africa faces challenges related to critical shortage of quality faculty; limited capacity of governance, leadership and management; inadequate financial support and problems of diversify funding; inadequate facilities and infrastructures; problems of quality and relevance of teaching and research; limited capacity of research, knowledge generation and adaptation capabilities; and problems in meeting increasing demand for equitable access, however, higher education is critical to economic success and long-term development of Africa, a continent facing several challenges of growth and development on many fronts. Higher education provides economic and social benefits, both to the individual and the public, produces qualified human capital, adapts and generates knowledge, promotes international cooperation and improves competitiveness in the global knowledge based economy (Yizengaw, 2008).

Education has been shown to play a crucial role in the reconstruction and reconciliation of societies emerging from conflict--in building peace and social cohesion, in facilitating economic recovery, and in guiding a country along an accelerated development path (World Bank, 2005).

There are currently 37 conflicts (major wars and lesser conflicts) taking place around the world (Global Security, 2010). Conflicts result in the death or flight of children and teachers, the threat of landmines and unexploded ordnances, and the destruction of schools and related infrastructure. As societies emerge from conflict, these are major factors hindering the ability of education to function in the reconstruction and reconciliation process  (HAWRYLENKO, 2010).

Priority must be placed on higher education in post-conflict reconstruction to help remedy the problems that led to conflict. When viewed as a developmental activity, education can be used to help undo the damage caused by conflict and assist in the reconciliation process to ensure future peace and stability. With the assistance of international aid agencies and foreign governments, communities and governments can rebuild schools and education systems to help transform both citizens and their societies. Reconstruction and reconciliation provide both opportunities and challenges for societies emerging from conflict (HAWRYLENKO, 2010)

Somalia is a post-conflict country that locates on the sunrise of horn of Africa and lies along the Indian Ocean and Gulf of Aden bounded by Ethiopia in the west and Kenya in the southwest, Djibouti is northwest and the area of Somalia is almost 40,000 kilometers. Somali higher education is on revival stage after the collapse of the country. All the community needs including the roads, higher education, health, energy, transportation, and information and communication technology might have collapsed in the conflicts, therefore, in response to this gap , the study evaluates  to find out the challenges and opportunities of Somali higher education for the time

being.

**Literature Review**

For many years higher education institutions and their governing bodies focused on fundamental research, education and teaching. Today, no institution can be able to neglect the link with enterprises, employment, technology transfer and economic innovation. This is a completely new role for institutions, including small ones, which initially were not concerned with these issues. Institutional leaders no doubt need appropriate training here. They are thoroughly familiar with research, since they are supposed to have done it themselves and in any case work in the world of research circles. And they know what education is, since they prepare and teach curriculum, but they do know how to master technology transfer or how to establish links with companies and reach out to the business sector (OECD, 2000).

The developed world is reacting quickly, with higher education a major political priority. High quality human capital is developed in higher quality education systems, with tertiary education providing the advanced skills that command a premium in today's workplace. Most developed countries have seen a substantial rise in the proportion of their young people receiving higher education. Lifelong learning is also being used to help workers adjust to rapidly changing economies (BANK, 2000).

Many writers seem to assume that it is not possible that for-profit institutions achieve high quality. In transnational higher education, the division between for-profit and public-sector institutions becomes somewhat blurred, anyway—given that even most public universities need at least to break even overseas, as they cannot rely on funding generated at home. Only a handful of institutions globally are relatively free of financial constraints—such as, New York University Abu Dhabi and Paris-Sorbonne University Abu Dhabi, which are both funded by the local government (O, 2012).

The role of higher education in conflict-affected countries has received increased attention during the past decade because of its significance for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) related to education. There has been an increasing awareness that Education for All (EFA) goals will only be achieved through success in accessing children in conflict affected contexts, who are among the hardest to reach (Save the Children Alliance 2006).

In post conflict societies, security is a scarce good. Memories of violence are fresh and the gulf between the formerly warring parties is still deep. The psychosocial scars of war are often long-lasting and may take decades, or even whole generations to heal, if they do at all. For example, the aftereffects of the American Civil War (1861 -1865) could still be felt in the South for a long time. Even today the memory of the war is kept alive and has an undeniable influence on federal politics (Grant 2003)

**3.1 Research Design**

This study follows a descriptive research design. It is cross-sectional and both qualitative and quantitative in nature. In analytical research, the researcher has to use facts or information already available, and analyze them to make a critical evaluation of the material the function of research design is to provide for the collection of relevant information with minimal expenditure of effort, time and money (Catherin, .R, & Ranji, 2002).

**3.2 Research Population**

The Study was conducted at Somali National University in Mogadishu, Somalia because it is one of the higher education sectors that contribute promoting higher education activities in Somali country, which is believed to be recovering from the bloodshed conflicts that engulfed the lives of many innocent people. However the respondents selected consisted of Bachelor holders, Master holder and PhD.

**3.3 Sample Size**

The sample size consists of 25 respondents who comprise Bachelor holders, Master holder and PhD. This was adopted from (Ghosh, Islam, & Hasan, 2014).However, in statistical wise, if the study population is unknown 25 to 35 is drawn as the sample of the population.

**Table3.1: Showing Categories of Respondents & Sample Size**

| Category of Respondents | Number | In Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Master holders | 5 | 20 |
| Bachelor holders | 15 | 60 |
| PhD    holders | 5 | 20 |
| **Total** | **25** | **100** |

**3.4 Sampling Procedure**

The sampling procedure of this study is non probability sampling procedure particularly convenience sampling or purposive sampling. The researcher selected this sampling technique because it gives the opportunity to

choose the member target population who provides the accurate information or data. Sampling is the act of process, or technique of selecting a suitable sample, or a representative part of a population for the purpose of determining parameters or characteristics of the whole population (W., 2002).

**3.5 Research Instruments**
The primary data of this study was collected through questionnaire. Questionnaire is used in view of the reality that the study is concerned with variables that can't be observing such information is best way of collecting data through questionnaires, questionnaires are used to collect data from the entire population but only a sample of the data collected are analyzed (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).. The questionnaires of the study were administered to the higher education in post-conflict societies: challenges and opportunities particularly, Somali higher education for the time being and were developed by the researcher. Four likert scales have been used.

**4. Results**
**4.1 Profile of the Respondents**
The following table displays Demographics of the respondents like gender, age, education qualification and **76%** 0f the study respondents were male and **24%** were female. This emphasizes that the male contributed more than the female in the study. **84%** of the respondents are at the age of 20-39. **12%** of the respondents are at the age of 40-59. And **4%**0f the respondents are above sixty, thus this point out that majority of the respondents aged between 20-39. Majority of the respondents were Bachelor holders (**60%**). **20%** of respondents were **PhD holders**. **20%** were also Master holders.

| Category | Frequency | Percentage % |
|---|---|---|
| **Sex** | | |
| Male | 19 | 76% |
| Female | 6 | 24% |
| **Total** | **25** | **100.0%** |
| **Age** | | |
| 20-39 | 21 | 84% |
| 40-59 | 3 | 12% |
| 60 above | 1 | 4% |
| **Total** | **25** | **100.0%** |
| **Educational Qualifications** | | |
| Master holders | 5 | 20% |
| Bachelor holders | 15 | 60% |
| PhD holders | 5 | 20% |
| **Total** | **25** | **100.0%** |

**5. Challenges of higher education in post-conflict societies**

| N0 | Statement | Mean | Standard deviation | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q1 | Brain drain makes retarded the society of post-conflict country like Somalia. | 3.40 | .577 | Very High |
| Q2 | Threats to academic freedom contributes the retardation of higher education in post-conflict country | 3.32 | .857 | Very High |
| Q3 | Repression encourages illiterate promotion in post-conflict societies | 3.28 | .936 | Very High |
| Q4 | Instability is considered to be the main constraint to decline the role of higher education in post-conflict society. | 3.48 | .872 | Very High |
| Q5 | Violence undermines the education progress of post-conflict societies. | 3.18 | 1.013 | High |
| **Mean index** | | **3.33** | **0.85** | **Very High** |

Source: Primary data, 2016

The findings of the above mentioned table indicate that challenges in post-conflict societies undermine the education as the mean scored **(3.33)** and standard deviation **(0.85)** respectively. Most of the respondents strongly agreed that retardation of higher education in post conflict country is often induced by brain drain meaning evacuation of educated people looking shelter and peaceful places for their bones.

**6. Opportunities of higher education in post-conflict societies**

| N0 | Statement | Mean | Standard deviation | Interpretation |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q6 | Higher education encourages eradication of poverty... | 3.22 | .900 | Very High |
| Q7 | Higher education provides job opportunity for the people to earn their living. | 3.36 | .810 | Very High |
| Q8 | Higher education contributes economic development | 3.40 | .707 | Very High |
| Q9 | Higher education develops good governance. | 3.64 | .638 | Very High |
| Q10 | . Higher education encourages peace. | 3.56 | .712 | High |
| **Mean index** | | **3.44** | **0.75** | **Very High** |

Source: Primary data, 2016

The findings of the above table show that higher education contributes good governance as well as rebuilding shattered societies in post conflict countries. Most of the respondents asserted that higher education can heal the psychosocial wounds of war, build peace and promote economic and social development as emphasized by the mean **(3.44)** and standard deviation **(0.75)** in a manner way.


**7. Discussion**

The results indicated that higher education contributes peace building and promotes good governance and there may be challenges hindering higher education activities in post-conflict societies. This study was supported by Prof. Dr. Abdul Mannan and Albert (2000) studied contribution of higher education institution in post conflict recovery and development as a case of the Autonomous Region of Bougainville Papua New Guinea. Their study found that higher education participates peace building, focuses on creation of politico-legal structures and development projects.

According to Francisco Pacheco (2013) his study was conflict, Post conflict and the functions of the universities: lessons from Colombia and other Armed conflicts. His study revealed that higher education institutions play instrumental roles during the conflict and post conflict. Those were not always conductive for peace building. The study also highlights that Universities, professors and students have been affected by the conflict, have participated in it and sometimes have been used by the combating parties for logistical purposes or to promote an ideology.

However this study is in line with the study of Prof. Dr. Mannan and Albert (2000) their study emphasizes that higher education encourages peace building.

Finally, there are other ways to reduce the challenges in post-conflict societies such as orientation and to get support from local governments and international donors to higher education.
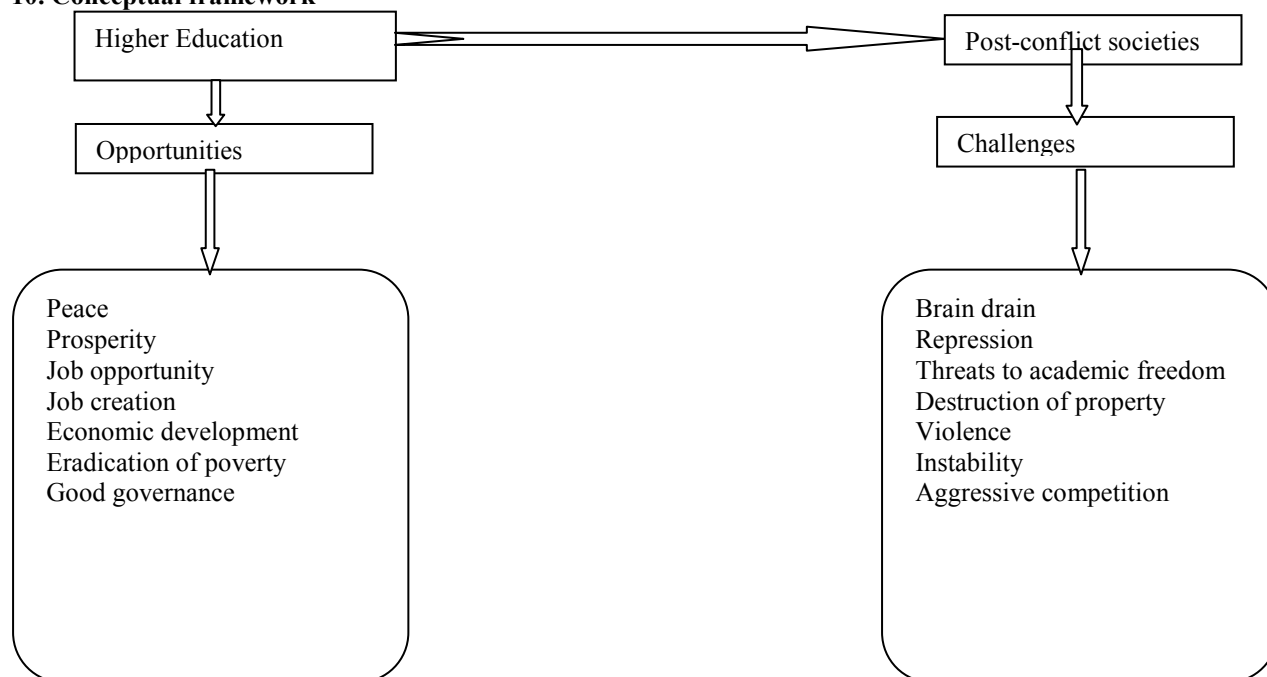

**8. Conclusion**

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the role of higher education in post-conflict societies: current state, challenges and opportunities. The data of this study was based on questionnaires administered to Somali National University; therefore, the study found that higher education contributes peace building.


**9. Recommendation**

The study recommends that government should give more consideration to higher education sectors in Somalia whether public or private to produce well qualified students loyal to their post-conflict country.

## 10. Conceptual framework

| Higher Education | ⟹ | Post-conflict societies |

Higher Education → Opportunities

Post-conflict societies → Challenges

Opportunities →

Peace
Prosperity
Job opportunity
Job creation
Economic development
Eradication of poverty
Good governance

Challenges →

Brain drain
Repression
Threats to academic freedom
Destruction of property
Violence
Instability
Aggressive competition

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