

Educators' Perceptions and Curriculum History in Somalia

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Abstract

Original Research Article

This study analysed the connection between educators' perceptions and curriculum history of secondary schools in Somalia. With the utilisation of descriptive research design, a self administered questionnaire and an interview guide were employed to collect information which was used to achieve the specific objective of assessing the effect of educators' perceptions on curriculum history of secondary schools in Somalia. The study adopted a mixed methods paradigm with descriptive research design, quantitative and qualitative approaches. A sample of 300 participants were chosen using Slovic's formula. Data was collected using survey questionnaire and interview schedule and analyzed using descriptive statistics and chi-square test for quantitative data and thematic synthesis was used for analyzing qualitative data. The study findings established a significant relationship between educators' perceptions and curriculum history of secondary schools in Somalia. The study concluded by proposing a model that can assist policy-makers in Somalia to change current history curricula to construct one that supports a Somalia national identity. From the study findings, the researcher recommended that using a humanistic approach to curriculum evaluation in post-conflict contexts may help teachers to explore people's perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs.

Keywords: Educators' perceptions, Curriculum history, National identity, Somalia.

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INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Somalia was born in 1960, when Italian and British Somaliland gained independence from the colonists. Straight after independence, the Somali public elected President Aden Abdullah Osman and Prime Minister Abdirashid Sharmarke to form the legitimate authority (Dawson, 1964).

In 1969, President Sharmarke was assassinated and Major General Mohamed Siad Barre came into power in "a bloodless coup d'état". Barre and the Supreme Revolutionary Council banned the formation of political parties, and dismissed parliament (Loubser & Solomon, 2014; Linke & Raleigh, 2011).

The US and the Soviet Union competed over Somalia during the Cold War. The US provided military support for the new-born country (Republic of Somalia) but then withdrew aid from Somali when Mohammed Siad Barre declared Somalia to be a socialist country, based on the alliance formed between Barre's regime and the Soviet Union. Somalia received enormous resources, soon Somalia had the "largest

army in the Horn of Africa". However, this relationship did not last for long.

From 1977 to 1978 during the Ogden war the Soviet Union entertained the Mengistu socialist system in Ethiopia; hence, Barre expelled all Soviets from Somalia, which was the end of the diplomatic relationship (Linke & Raleigh, 2011; Loubser & Solomon, 2014). Consequently, the absence of the Soviet Union from Somalia paved the way for the US to have an international exchange with Barre; henceforth, the US resumed financial support.² Further, Somalia-US cooperation flourished post Ogaden war. In 1991, Somalia had a civil war and state-collapse. Post-conflict Somalia disintegrated into three regions: Central Southern Somalia; Puntland; and the self-declared Republic of Somaliland.

In post conflict nations, the study of history has the potential to reinforce national identity and social values (Yazici & Yildirim, 2018). Historical narratives can enhance reconciliation while a manipulative content could drive conflict and "sectarian attitudes" (Naylor, 2015). History also enables students to get the opportunity to visit and rediscover the past to

understand the present and inform future action (Naylor, 2015; Yazici & Yildirim, 2018).

Despite the important role of history education in social transformation the conflict theorists have ignored the relationship between education and conflict (Paulson 2007, Rappleye & Paulson 2007). Furthermore, due to the contentious content of history, school curriculum is usually dominated by state policy and thus interests of the political parties are emphasized (Yazici & Yildirim, 2018). This questions the accuracy of the content of the school curriculum.

Weldon (2009) argues that using the traditional approach of a formal history curriculum creates an inefficiently constructed national identity that is irrelevant to content. Ahonen (2014), Naylor (2015), Paulson (2015), and Smith (2011) advocate for the multi-perspective as a contemporary approach to teach history. The multi-perspective approach emphasizes disciplinary skills, such as comparison, interpretation and causation, and evaluating primary and secondary

evidence. The knowledge underpinning multi-perspectives encourages students to construct learning experiences that incorporate different sources and multiple perspectives (Ahonen, 2014; Paulson, 2015). Weldon (2009) also recommends using a multi-perspective approach to construct identity within the national context.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE RESEARCH STUDY

Intergroup Emotional Theory

Contemporary theorists introduced several models to examine the ambiguous nature of attitudes. Intergroup Emotional theory (IET) explains antagonistic emotions towards out-group members. One of most influential models is the multicomponent model which views attitudes as consisting of three components: cognitive, affective, and behaviour. Maio and Haddock (2009) consider this model as a taxi CAB. This metaphor determines the importance of these components to explain the nature of attitudes.

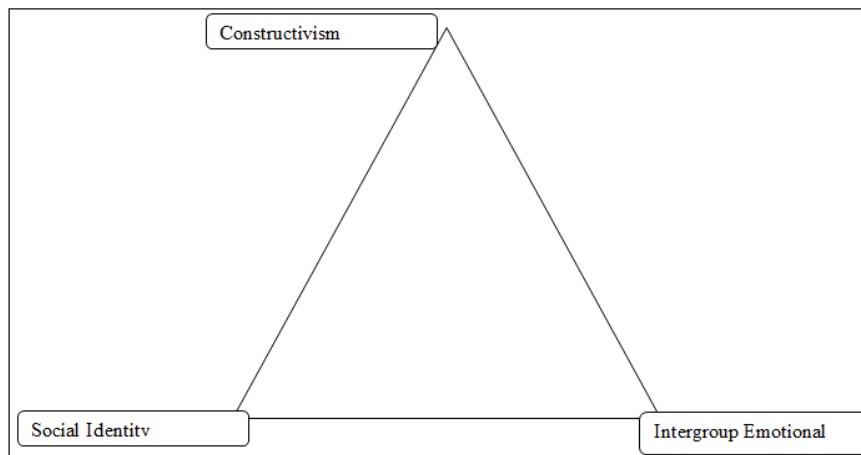


Figure 1: The Theoretical Framework (Multidisciplinary Approach)

The cognitive component refers to thoughts and beliefs, while the affective component refers to “feelings or emotions associated with an attitude object” (Maio & Haddock, 2009). These components do not function in isolation, but have “synergistic” relationships, which means positive beliefs consequently have positive affective effects and behaviours. Most attitude studies emphasize both cognitive and affective component (full name of intergroup and constructivism).

Given this, emotions are defined as “including appraisals or appreciations, patterned physiological processes, action tendencies, subjective feelings, expressions and instrumental behaviours” (Mackie & Hamilton, 2014, cited Fischer, Shaver, & Cornichon, 1990, p. 85).

Individuals explicitly develop emotions which categorise identity to groups. This emotion significantly

influences intergroup relationships and behaviours, known as “structural emotions” (Eagly & Fine, 2010, cited Kemper, 1977)). This sheds light on emotion as an essential component in societal interaction and how emotions influence identity formation.

Attitude (affective dimension) and its influence on emotions is explained by Intergroup Emotional Theory (IET). “When social identification is salient, the out-group appraisal engenders distinct emotions of antagonism”. Glick, P. and Fiske (2007) believed that affect is an important mediator that influences attitudes such as ethnic prejudice. Affective and cognitive components inform attitude strength. Maio and Haddock (2009) debated the influence of strong attitude versus weak attitude. Strong attitude is characterised by four key aspects: (1) strong attitude is more stable over time, (2) strong attitude is rigorous and is difficult to change, (3) “Strong attitudes are more

likely to influence information processing” (p. 42), and (4) strong attitude significantly influences behaviour.

As far as attitude functions are concerned, several models have been developed to explain attitude functions (Maio & Haddock, 2009, cited Smith et al., 1956) found that attitude has three main functions: (1) object-appraisal is the attitude ability to interpret positive and negative attributes of objects in social setting; (2) externalization, here attitude function is used to protect the individual’s self-esteem against ego conflict; and (3) social-adjustment, where attitude function enables association with group members whom we like and avoidance of people whom we do not like. Given this, individuals explicitly develop emotions which categorise identity and membership in groups. This emotion strongly influences intergroup relationships and behaviour and are known as “structural emotions” (Eagly, & Fine, 2010, cited Kemper, 1977). This means that individuals not only categorise themselves as members of the in-group but also “react emotionally when situations or events affect the in-group”.

Mackie and Hamilton (2014) believe there are four aspects of inter-group relationships where cognition and emotions intertwine: (1) social categorization, (2) action of others, (3) characteristics of contact settings, and (4) discussion of the affective consequences of stereotype activation.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

Data Capturing

Information utilized for the research study was reached at using both primary and secondary sources of data. Primary data was garnered by use of questionnaires and interviews to important persons related to the research study. Secondary data was gathered using documentary reviews. The study used (mixed methods), a descriptive research design including qualitative and quantitative approaches. Creswell (2006) mentioned that descriptive research design is specifically used to describe a phenomenon and its data characteristics. The researcher employed the pragmatic philosophy as a guiding ideology in the research study. The researcher selected a total of 300 participants (sample size) using the sloven’s formula to take part in the study.

Sampling Methods

The researcher employed simple random sampling, stratified random sampling and purposive sampling techniques in the research study in order to collect data for the study. The target population comprised of categories like teachers, principals, deputy principals, district officials, students and support staff in Somalia.

Questionnaire and interview schedule

The survey questionnaire is a research study tool consisting of inter-related items organized by the researcher about the research challenge under investigation based on the specific objectives of the study. Items were systematically organized and written for the respondents to answer with options as shown on the five likert scale arrangement. This method was chosen because it garners more data within a short time.

Nevertheless, the self-administered questionnaire involved some challenges of attrition. There were few copies that were not returned, though this was solved by distributing a lot of copies than the required number of the sample size of 300 people. The purpose of a qualitative interview guide was to understand the participants subjective view of their world; unfolding the meaning of their environment, uncovering their lived lifestyles before scientific synthesis (Cronje, 2013).

Validity and reliability of research instruments

The Validity of the survey questionnaire was reached at by using content validity Index. From the testing of the validity of the research tools, the researcher came out with content validity index (CVI) of 0.78 which was well above 0.75 indicating that the research tool was valid to collect data for a scientific research study (Creswell, 2006). Besides, the validity of the interview schedule was got by talking to key respondents to prove the answered questions (Creswell, 2006). Reliability of the self-administered Questionnaire was calculated using Cronbach’s alpha coefficient formula in relation to the variables that had an alpha coefficient of figure more than 0.70. In addition, the reliability of the interview schedule was reached at by resorting on peer review synthesis (Creswell, 2006).

Data Analysis

The data for the research study was analyzed using descriptive statistics and inferential analyses. Descriptive statistics included tables, frequencies, percentages, pie charts, bar graphs and inferential analyses were Pearson chi-square for analyzing quantitative data. However, Qualitative data were analyzed through categorizing data into themes or sub themes for easy Interpretation in a storyline manner (Udoewa, 2018).

RESULTS

Background Characteristics of the Respondents

The results indicated that 35% of students were from Mogadishu, 32% from Somaliland, and 33% from Puntland as it is illustrated in Figure 2. This meant that the participants that supplied data to the researcher were balanced in terms of region. It was therefore the right group to provide the right data for regional balance of the research study in Somalia.

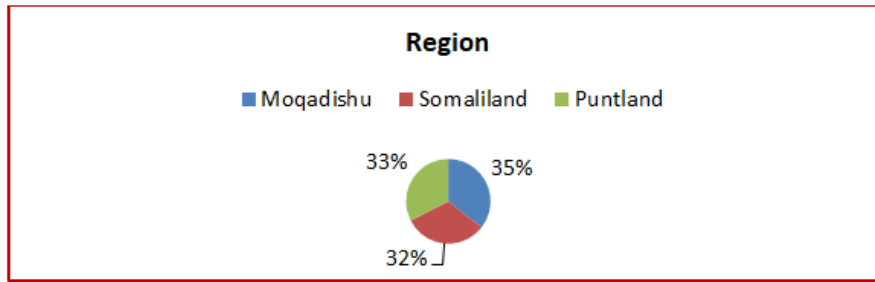


Figure 2: Region

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS AND COUNTRY

As can be seen in the Figure 3 below, when asked to rate the importance of religion, 82% of the students living in Mogadishu classified their religion as the most important part of their self-identity, 4% regarded it as second most important, and 14% regarded it as the third most important. 91% of the students from Somaliland noted religion as the most important aspect,

6% as the second most important aspect and 3% as the third most important aspect. Finally, 98% of the students from Puntland reported religion as the most important and 1% each reported religion as the second most and the third most. The above regional differences were significant [$\chi^2(4, N = 300) = 21.874, p < 0.01$]. This meant that there was a significant relationship between educators' perceptions (Religion) and secondary school history curriculum.

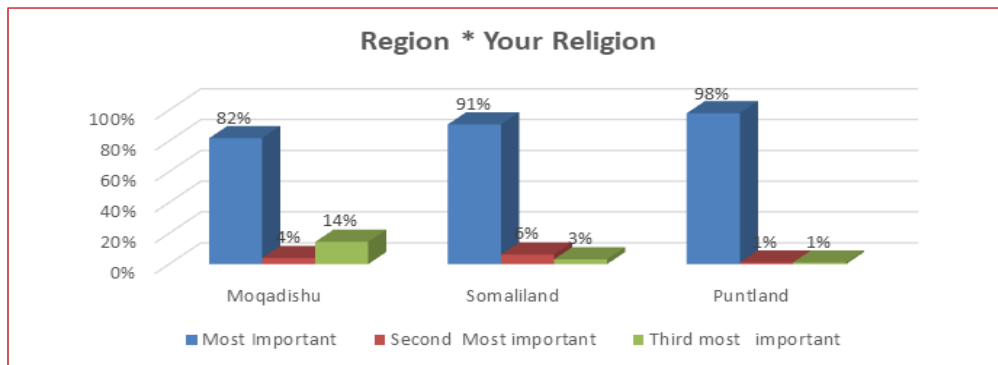


Figure 3: Importance of Religion (p < 0.01)

RESULTS FROM QUALITATIVE SECTION OF THE STUDY

The Vice-Principal stated:

"If we managed to develop a history course to include historical events that happened in the past, this is going to add a lot of things for students. Students will have the opportunity to know what happened in the past and this will enable them to identify causes of conflicts so they will not be repeated in the present or future". This meant that despite this importance, there is no content either about civil war or the causes. In general, no content of meaningful knowledge, historical consciousness, and understanding. Thus, history education is not only important for understanding the past, it is also significant for developing the analytical ability among the pupils so that they are able to relate and connect the past with the present and understand causal relationships between phenomena.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study emphasize the importance of having a systematic, rigorous evaluation of the curriculum. Using a humanistic approach to

curriculum evaluation is recommended in post-conflict contexts to help teachers to explore people's perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs.

This finding was in agreement with the study conducted by Ellison and Ahonen (2014) on the role of education in peace building in Sierra Leone who asserted that teachers' participation in curriculum development and research addresses different socio-cultural-political needs of the country in education in Somalia.

CONCLUSION

The information obtained from this study identified a serious gap in the current history curriculum in Somalia. The study proposed a model that can assist policy-makers in Somalia to change current history curricula to construct one that supports a Somalia national identity. Although security is the current priority of the Somali government, developing and implementing a national history curriculum is vital to achieve successful social-political transformation.

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