

PAPERS PRESENTED TO THE 16th CONFERENCE

**Private Higher Education in Somalia: Challenges and Opportunities
for Skills Development, Employment Creation and Entrepreneurship**

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Abstract: *Somalia's education was mainly affected by three periods, namely: Post independence, the Military regime, and conflict and post conflict period. The present study was designed to investigate the major private higher education (PHE) challenges and opportunities in Somalia. The data were collected through reviewing the available reports, interviewing participants using instructed questionnaire and personal communication with the education authorities. The Study revealed that, with the exception of Somali National University, higher education, socio-economic development and entrepreneurship in Somalia depend on the private sector. The study found that Somalia is facing complex and multidimensional challenges in the areas of higher educational policies and regulations, finance, academic infrastructures, student's language barrier and shortage of well-trained University teaching staff. However, the private higher education and NGOs ensure employment for a considerable number of graduands and sustain the socio-economic development of Somali community despite of the long-term conflict situation in the country. In conclusion, PHE plays the major role in sustaining education, entrepreneurship and socioeconomic development in Somalia despite the painful situation of the country. Efficient governmental rules and intervention in collaboration with the private founders and regional donors like African Union, IGAD and educational NGOs like UNESCO is of great value to face the above mentioned problems and challenges.*

Key words: Education, University, Private Sector, Entrepreneurship,

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Introduction

Somalia's education was mainly affected by three periods, namely: Post independence (1960-69), the Military regime (1969-90), and conflict and post conflict period (1991 to Date). Somali education in pre-colonial time was dispensed through informal systems of communal interaction (Abdi, 2005). With the arrival of colonialism in the late 19th century, formal programmes of learning were progressively established (Abdi, 1998). In 1954, Institute of Social Science, Law and Economics was established in Mogadishu and linked to University of Rome (SDRB 2014). It later became the University Institute, which provided the foundation for the Somali National University (SNU) in post-colonial time (Markus, 2010). Before the civil war (1991), the SNU was the only university in the country and founded in 1968 and completely nationalised in 1972 (Wolfgang, 1983; SDRB 2014). The higher education in Somalia was solely managed by the government of Somalia until 1990s (Abdi, 2005). The civil war resulted in the destruction of educational, economic and social structures of the country (Abdi, 2005; Hussein, 2015). Despite the years of destruction brought on by the civil war, the educational sector experienced some reconstruction (Markus, 2010; Abdinoor 2008).

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) pointed out that some parts of the world are becoming deadly places for official education (O'Malley 2007; UNESCO 2010). In most countries, the economic crisis generally reduced the efficacy of the public sector to provide continued and adequate funding support for an expanding higher education sector (Mahmudul Alam *et al.*, 2007). However, countries adopted varying strategies to cope with the situation by encouraging and promoting privatization in higher education (Mahmudul Alam *et al.*, 2007; Rizvi, 2016). Financing higher education has come into sharp focus in both developed and developing countries since the 1980s and 1990s (Jalal 2016). The knowledge, skills and enterprise of the people are of crucial importance to facilitate and sustain economic development in a developing economy (Wolfgang, 1983; Abdoulaye and Bity, 2011). The private universities have an important role to play in developing long-term manpower plan for the critical skills required for the economic development (Mahmudul Alam *et al.*, 2007). As reported by Wolfgang (1983), this concept of building the human capital also reflects in the statement made by Mohamed Siyad Barre, former

Somali President, that was “A nation’s brain, prosperity, self-respect and dignity depend upon the level of the educated people in that country”.

Approximately, 4,000 students were enrolled in the national University before the State collapsed and over 50,000 students were enrolled in 50 higher education institutions across the country (Markus, 2010; HIPS report, 2013). Civil society groups, international organizations and local educators as well as businessmen initiated a series of higher education in the country as a response to the growing number of secondary schools in 1996 (SDRB 2014). Indian Ocean University was reported to be the first private University founded in Somalia, after which - through 1993-2013 - an average of 3-4 universities were established annually (SDRB 2014). In 2014 more than 70 universities were reported nationally, and in Mogadishu alone there were more than 43 universities (SDRB 2014). More recently, 75 universities were recorded according to Somali Business Directory (Somali Yellow Pages® 2018). More than 60% (46) of them are located in Benadir region (Mogadishu) particularly in Hodan District. The preferred colleges were Medicine (34.7%), Economics (2.8%), Computer Sciences (14.1%), Sharia and law (5.2%) and Engineering (5.1%) respectively (SDRB 2014).

Education can help to overcome or prevent conflict if it provides space for communication across social, ethnic or other lines of division and teaches’ tolerance and respect for each other (Markus, 2010). However, most education programmes were not planned in advance from a peace-building perspective (Alan smith *et al.*, 2011). Thus, this aspect required inspired and dedicated actors (teachers, students, politicians, community) who wished to make a change (Markus, 2010).

The country now has internationally recognized government which starts consultation with education providers to come up with policies that will govern the education system (Hussein 2015).

Since the higher education in Somalia experienced some reconstruction and development post-conflict (Abdinoor 2008; Markus, 2010; HIPS report, 2013), the aim of this study was to assess and evaluate the private higher education in Somalia, especially on private universities in order to provide baseline information on education challenges and opportunities,

employment creation, financial sustainability, growth of the higher education sector and the relation between education and peace-building as well as education and poverty alleviation in Somali context.

Methodology

This study was conducted between January to April 2018. The primary data collection took place in Mogadishu where most of the participants were based and the findings should be seen as reflection of only the views of those who participated. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used in this study. A total of 81 participants were interviewed using structured questionnaires. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with administration office of eight universities and other participants who were important contributors to the subject such as lecturers (35), students (32) and three representatives of NGOs. In addition, three senior staffs in Ministry of Higher Education namely, Director of Private Higher Education (*Dr. Abdishakur Sh.H. Fiqi*), the Head of Teaching Staff Training and Development (*Mr. Abdullahi O. Omar*) and Ex-director General of the Ministry of Education (*Mr. Mohamed A. Nur*) were also interviewed. The information gathered relates to the general background on private higher education (PHE) in Somalia, challenges and opportunities of education, employment creation and the role of PHE in sustainable peace and development as well as poverty alleviation in Somalia.

The secondary data collection considered the available literature on privatization and private higher education and economic development in Somalia and other countries. These reports and policies were reviewed, analysed and discussed.

Data management and analysis:

Data was entered to excel sheet for descriptive charts analysis before transferred to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25 for further statistical analysis. Descriptive analysis and *chi square* were performed using SPSS version 25. A *p*-value less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$) was considered statistically significant.

Results and Discussion

1. Ministry of Higher Education (MHE)

It is important to mention that Higher education in Somalia is a part of Ministry of Education, Culture and Higher Education (plate 1).

Their excellences, participants from the ministry stated that with the exception of Somali National University, all Somali universities are private. The number of universities and other institutions may reach 100 institutions. However, there are no reliable records of them. Data about the staff working in these universities was not available in the ministry. The renewal registration period is 2 years as written on the authorized Certificate below (plate 1).



Plate 1: Registration certificate of Somali universities

There are simple rules followed to register PHE institutions in MHE with the following important points:

1. Profile of the institute including full name and physical address of the Institution.
2. Letter of ownership from legitimate Public Notary.
3. Act or Statute of the institution,

Their excellences also admitted that there was no proper way for managing higher education previously. However, the ministry is planning to set a system of management for the private higher education during this year (2018). They are working on a plan for systematic data gathering to have accurate record on PHE institutions and setting master guide line for the Curriculum of higher education as well. There is also a process to organize higher education commission to tackle the issues with the

ministry. This commission will standardize higher education institutions in the country.

The number of Somali Higher education graduates was not also recorded whatever degree, but it was part of the 2018 plan. The ministry has already started to assess the number of Assistant lecturers, Lecturers, Senior Lecturers and Professors working in PHE and systematically made accurate record for assisting them in training and skill development for better delivery in Higher education and research for the whole country.

Their excellences agreed that the role of PHE is very clear and it deserves to be appreciated whatever they did to the Somali community, the history records. They also acknowledged the importance of this kind of study to pave the way for preliminary data in PHE for further countrywide Education assessment.

2. Private Universities in Somalia:

According to our study design and the preliminary visits, about 30 universities agreed to participate in this study. However, only *eight* universities responded at the end. This could be due to hyper-competition between the PHE institutions, lack of records and lack of research experience in these universities. This point is to be considered as a real challenge for any PHE assessment in Mogadishu, Somalia.

The interviewed universities in the present study are registered in Ministry of Higher Education (MHE) and other international organization including Association of African Universities (AAU). Only one of them has no any international association membership. Data analysed from AAU website (www.aau.org 2018) revealed that, 15 private Somali universities are members of AAU. There are 4.03% of all registered African universities (372) -excluding pending and withdrawn memberships- at the time of the internet search (www.aau.org/members/2018). They are more than the Ethiopian registered universities (7) and almost similar to Egyptian (18) and Kenyan ones (17). If we exclude governmental registered universities of these countries, Somalia may record the highest number of registered private higher institutions in AAU.

Most of these universities were founded by Shareholders 4 (50.0%), foundations 2 (25.0%) or persons 2 (25.0%). All participant universities

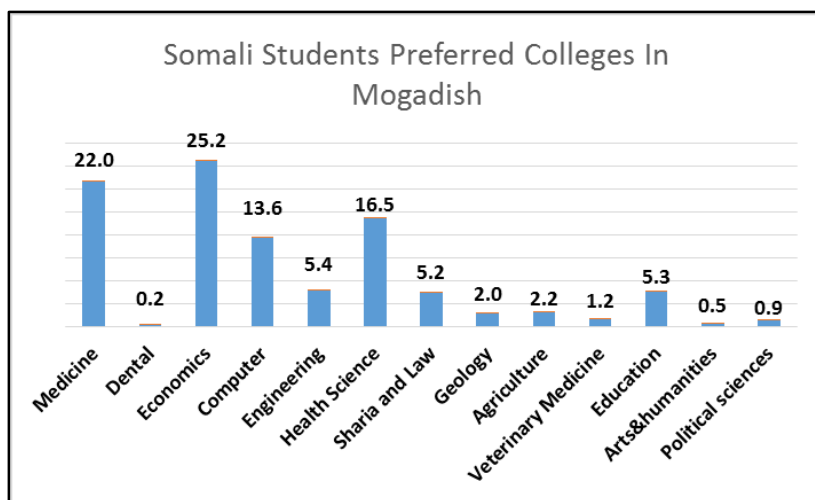
have specific policy followed to assure the quality of education. However, with the exception of one university, these policies were developed by university members. The exception one mentioned that their policy was set by a professional organization. The number of colleges in these universities is ranging from minimum 4 to maximum 11 with mean of (6.63 ± 2.5) colleges per university. In terms of students in this study, the total number is 14369 student including 10143 males and 4226 females. The variations in number of students between these universities is very large where the minimum number is 102 in one of the new universities founded in 2014 and the maximum is 4653 with mean of (2052.71 ± 1906.63) students. Generally, the number of students is increasing dramatically when compared to the findings of SDRB (2014) as presented in table (2).

According to the university administrators participated in this study, the total number of teaching staff is 1027. SDBR (2014) reported that the number of teaching staff was only 238 in five universities from the same study area (Table 4). These findings show drastic increase in staff employment in Somali private universities. Moreover, the majority [5 (62.50%)] of these universities said that they recruited one to seven foreign lecturers.

2.1. The Preferred Colleges by Somali Students in Mogadishu In the data presented in Figure (1), the number of students of College of Economics and Management Studies (25.2%) was superior followed by Medicine and Surgery (22.0%), Health Sciences (16.5%) including Nurse, Public Health and Laboratory Sciences and Technology respectively. College of Computer Sciences (13.6%) also has special consideration in the study area because Somali people like Informational Technology (IT) as revealed in these interviews with the three groups (Administrator, Lecturers and Students). A similar observation was reported by SDRB (2014). However, in their study, College of Medicine was the superior among preferred colleges. This increases in number of students in College of Economics and Management may be only due to lower fee payment compared to the fee payment for College of Medicine and Surgery. Moreover, in our study new programmes like Dental, Geology and Health Sciences were reported and more new colleges of Engineering,

Agriculture and Veterinary Medicine were established in new universities such as Abrar University which was founded in 2014.

The very few number of students in very important education fields, which are important for Somalia sustainable development such as Education 5.3%, Agriculture 2.2% and Veterinary Medicine 1.2%, could be attributed to the lack of government higher education policy and intervention. The few numbers of colleges of education and the very few numbers of students could be explained by the findings of Hussein (2015). The latter author found that although most of the teaching staffs of Secondary schools are BSc holders, but they are not graduated from college of education. Moreover, the sustainable economic development of Somalia is based on livestock, marine and fisheries and agriculture, however, neither the student nor their families prefer these fields of study. This could only be solved by government higher education support and intervention.



2.2. Fig. 1: Somali Students Preferred Colleges in PHE in Mogadishu, Somalia Language of instruction

English is the medium of instruction in most of the universities took part in the present study. Complain of students language barrier was reported by Hussein (2015) and SDRB (2014). Therefore, we included that question for all PHE participants in this study. Although the majority of the students said they had no problem with language of instruction in their

universities, most of both administrator and teaching staff believe on the presence of this problem with insignificant ($p=0.095$) statistical variation (Table 1). Most of the interviewed universities [5 (62.5%)] admitted that there was a problem of language of instruction among their students. One out of the three who said no problem, the language of instruction in that university is Arabic language. According to our findings, language of instruction is real problem for most of university students (52.0%) but with insignificant ($p=0.095$) statistical differences between the tested groups. This could be explained by the findings of Hussein (2015), who found that schools operate different teaching languages and different curriculums as well. The latter author also reported that there is lack of trained English teachers in the Somalia schools including the study area. The report of SDRB (2014) also recommended that the situation of different and nongovernmental learning systems brought in education mess in higher education.

Table 1: Response of participant to language of instruction barrier to the student

Respondent	Language of instruction barrier (%)		
	Yes	No	Total
Administration	5 (12.8)	3 (8.3)	8 (10.7)
Lecturer	22 (56.4)	13 (36.1)	35 (46.7)
Students	12 (30.8)	20 (55.6)	32 (42.7)
Total	39 (52.0)	36 (48.0)	75 (100)
p value	0.095		

2.3. The Gender Issue:

In agreement with SDRB (2014), male students were more (70.6%) than female ones (29.4%) in the investigated institutes (Fig. 2). This is also reflected in the number of female employed as teaching staff (Fig. 3) and the employee in the interviewed NGOs in this study.

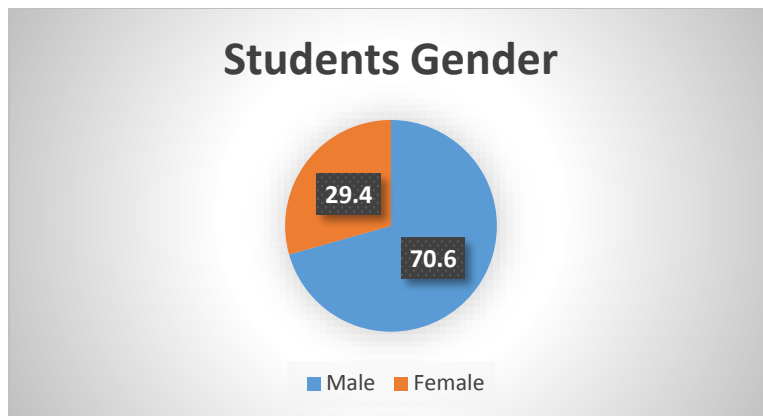


Fig. 2: Gender status of the students in PHE in Mogadishu, Somalia
 Analysis of data collected from secondary resources (SDRB 2014) revealed similar percentage of gender distribution between the students in our study area and Punt land State in 2013 (Table 2).

Table 2: Students enrolled in Somali Universities in 2013

Area	No of Universities	No of students enrolled in 2013				
		Total	No of male	%	No of female	%
Mogadishu	15	6341	4593	72.43	1748	27.57
Puntland	8	2711	1899	70.05	812	29.95
Total	23	9052	6492	71.72	2560	28.28

*Source: SDRB (2014)

Table 3: Response of participants to the availability of some physical facilities in the investigated universities

Respondent	Physical facilities in PHE in Somalia										
	Lecture rooms		Laboratory			Library			Computer Facilities		
	Adeq.	Insuff	Adeq.	Insuff	No	Adeq.	Insuff.	No	Adeq.	Insuff.	No
Admin	7(14.0)	1(4.0)	5(18.5)	3(7.3)	0(0.0)	6(17.6)	2(7.1)	0(0.0)	8(25.8)	0(0.0)	0(0.0)
Lecturer	17(34.0)	18(72.0)	7(25.9)	24(58.5)	4(57.1)	14(41.2)	16(57.1)	5(38.5)	14(45.2)	20(69.0)	1(6.7)
Students	26(52.0)	6(24.0)	15(55.6)	14(34.1)	3(42.9)	14(41.2)	10(35.7)	8(61.5)	9(29.0)	9(31.0)	14(93.3)
Total	50(66.7)	25(33.3)	27(36.0)	41(54.7)	7(9.3)	34(45.3)	28(37.3)	13(17.3)	31(41.3)	29(38.7)	15(20.0)
P value	0.008		0.079			0.218			0.000		

2.4. The availability of physical facilities in PHE Institutes

As presented in Table 3, the majority of participants ranked the availability of lecture rooms and computer facilities as adequate with highly significant statistical ($p=0.008$ and $p=0.000$ respectively) variation between the three groups (table 3). The majority of the participants said there were no sufficient laboratories in these private universities but without statistically significant ($p=0.079$) difference. Although many of the participants reported that there were adequate libraries in these universities, the statistically variation between the groups is insignificant ($p=0.218$).

3. Employment creation and entrepreneurship:

3.1. The Teaching Staff in PHE in Mogadishu, Somalia

According to the data collected from university administrations, the total number of Somali teaching staff was 1288 employee. Almost most of them [1027 (79.74)] were teaching staffs. This number is incomparable to that of SDRB (2014) from five universities in Mogadishu 2013 (Table 4).

As presented in Figure 3, the majority (84.4%) of lecturers are male. The analysed data from SDRB (2014) revealed similar results (Table 4). Most of the staffs work as par time (52.4%). This is linked to their preference instead of having permanent job so as to have chance to work in more than one university. Moreover, they are teaching more than one subject to gain more income. Additionally, Hussein (2015) found that most of the teaching staffs of schools are BSc holders and they are graduated from college of education. The level of education of the majority of the interviewed lecturers is Master Degree (48.5%) followed by BSc (22.9%) and PhD (8.0%). The few PhD could be attributed to lack of post graduate colleges in the country and the student should travel abroad for PhD study. This could also affect the master's degree students by lack of capable supervisors in those universities who have postgraduate programmes.

Table 4: Academic staff working in Somali Universities in 2013*

Area	No of Universities	N of academic staff working in 2013				
		Total	No of male	%	No of female	%
Mogadishu	5	238	223	93.70	15	6.30
Puntland	7	361	296	81.99	65	18.01
Total	12	599	519	86.64	80	13.36

*Source: SDRB (2014)

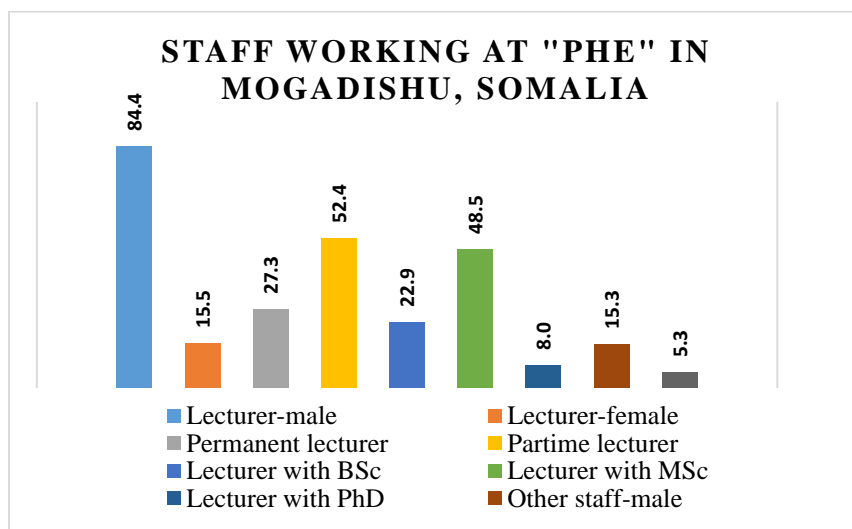


Fig. 3: Level of education, gender and job status of the staff working in PHE in Mogadishu, Somalia

Thirty five lecturers from different private universities agreed to participate in this study. Most of them are male 34 and only one is female. In agreement with the results of administration offices interviews, most of the interviewed lecturers are MSc holders (68.6%) and only (5.7%) of them are PhD holders (Table 4). This showed that development and training of staff is very poor, although 7 (87.5%) of the interviewed universities mentioned that they are operating staff development programmes, and by several means. Most of the participant (54.3%) had paid for their BSc in these private universities (Table 5) before they travelled for postgraduate study abroad. They also said that Sudan, Pakistan, Malaysia, Turkey, Uganda and Kenya are the most countries for studying higher education.

In consistence with their adequate (71.4%) salaries, most of the lecturers (82.9%) are married. This is a good indicator of the role of PHE in livelihood improvement of Somali community.

Table 5: Education, job and social status of the interviewed Lecturers

Education level of Lecturers (%)			Study BSc as (%)		
BSc	MSc	PhD	Full payment	Half Payment	Scholarship
9 (25.7)	24 (68.6)	2 (5.7)	19 (54.3)	4 (11.4)	12 (34.3)
Job status (%)		Salary (%)		Marriage (%)	
Permanent	Part time	Adequate	Insufficient	yes	No
17 (48.6)	18 (51.4)	25 (71.4)	10 (28.6)	29 (82.9)	6 (17.1)

3.2. Nongovernmental Organizations:

Two of the participants of the three NGOs in this study have MSc degree and one with BSc and they are as follow:

1. The Director of finance Office of Polish Humanitarian Acting NGO.
2. The Field Coordinator of DBG NGO.
3. The Director of food security and livelihood of Somali Association for Rehabilitation and Development NGO.

They declared that the Somali graduands working with them in a permanent job are 163 including BSc holders, whereas 69 (42.33%) of them were females and 94 (54.67%) were males (Table 5). They also had 13 jobs as other staffs, where 2 of them are females and 11 are males (Table 5).

Table 5: Employment opportunities in the interviewed NGOs

NGO	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
1	20 (74.07)	7 (25.93)	27 (16.56)
2	25 (75.76)	8 (24.24)	33 (20.25)
3	49 (47.57)	54 (52.43)	103 (63.19)
Total	94 (57.67)	69 (42.33)	163 (100)

The Role of PHE in Development of Somalia:

Most of the participants ranked the role of PHE in development of Somalia as good (68.0) with insignificant ($p=0.646$) statistical differences (Table 6).

Separately, students ranked it as very good (55.6) or excellent (50.0). That is, may be because they are the main stakeholders particularly if we consider the increasing difficulties of travelling abroad for study. Generally, in absence of the role of government and international community in education policy and support, the role of PHE in development and relief of Somalia could not be neglected. Therefore, we started our ranking in this study with good. It is worth mentioning that following complete devastation of the country – including education sector- by the violent civil conflict, private education institutions emerged when the Somali society showed serious need of education for their beloved young people (SDRB 2014). The situation of different and nongovernmental learning systems brought weakness in higher education. Even though, the unique effort of PHE enables Somali people to continue doing better maintaining their country and taking it forward in a distinguished painful environment.

In this study, all participants (admin and lecturers) stated that they are following their graduands or colleagues who are doing well in private sector, government and even abroad.

The continuous increasing number of universities is a clear reflection of high level necessity of Somali people for more advance training and education. The more skilled population including both broadly educated population and a cadre of top performance results in stronger economic performance as described by SDRB (2014).

Table 6: Response of participants to the role of PHE in development of Somalia

Respondent	The role of PHE in development of Somalia (%)			
	Good	Very good	Excellent	Total
Administration	6 (11.8)	1 (5.6)	1 (16.7)	8 (10.7)
Lecturer	26 (51.0)	7 (38.9)	2 (33.3)	35 (46.7)
Students	19 (37.3)	10 (55.6)	3 (50.0)	32 (42.7)
Total	51 (68.0)	18 (24.0)	6 (8.0)	75 (100)
P value	0.646			

Conclusion:

1. The number of Universities and the number of students are increasing in Somalia.

2. The role of PHE in Somalia development, socio-economic improvement, conflict relief and peace, food security and poverty alleviation is very clear and appreciated by the Somali community.
3. Efficient governmental management, plan and policy is lacking in PHE field.
4. Competent teaching staff training and subject specialization is requiring in private universities.
5. Nongovernmental learning systems in pre-school and school education are the cause of language of instruction barrier in higher education institutes.

Recommendations:

1. **Effective government** management and resourceful intervention in pre-university and higher education. The help of African Union, IGAD and UNESCO -as an example-could be of great value in this matter.
2. **Governmentally** facilitated more large-scale research on general and higher education is highly recommended for sustainable improvement of academic and scientific situation in the country.

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