

Human Capital Investment in Universities: A Case Study of Gedo International University

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the role of Gedo International University (GIU) in fostering human capital investment within the Beledhawa District of Somalia. It highlights the significance of higher education in driving socio-economic development in developing regions. The research examines GIU's contributions to the healthcare and education sectors, evaluates the impact of its graduates on local economic growth, and identifies challenges faced by the institution. Through a combination of qualitative interviews and data analysis, the study underscores the importance of adequate investment in universities to enhance their potential as catalysts for regional advancement. The findings emphasize the need for strategic partnerships and policy recommendations to further strengthen GIU's role in human capital development.

Keywords: Human Capital Investment, Gedo International University, Socio-Economic Development, Healthcare Workforce, Education Sector, Developing Regions.

INTRODUCTION

Human capital investment (HCI) in universities is essential for cultivating a knowledgeable and skilled workforce capable of driving economic growth and fostering social development. Universities play a critical role in HCI by providing education, training, and research opportunities that enhance individuals' skills, knowledge, and competencies. Higher education significantly contributes to increased productivity, innovation, and societal well-being. Furthermore, universities shape students' intellectual and professional capacities, equipping them to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving global economy. By offering diverse academic programs and promoting critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving, universities foster a workforce that is adaptable and vital for sustaining economic competitiveness and addressing societal challenges.

Universities also serve as hubs for research and innovation, advancing knowledge and driving technological progress. This research fuels economic growth and contributes to social mobility by enabling individuals to acquire qualifications for better-paying jobs. In developing regions, universities are crucial for breaking the cycle of poverty by expanding access to quality education and promoting social justice through equitable educational opportunities.

However, adequate investment is necessary for universities to realize their potential in HCI fully. This includes financial resources, infrastructure, faculty development, and student support services, ensuring that higher education remains accessible, affordable, and equitable for all.

Problem Statement

Despite the globally recognized role of higher education in fostering economic growth and societal advancement, there remains a significant gap in research concerning the specific contributions of universities in developing regions to local socio-economic development. While numerous studies have explored the impact of higher education in developed nations, the unique challenges and opportunities presented by universities in under-resourced regions, particularly in fragile states, are often overlooked. Gedo International University

(GIU), the only higher education institution in the Gedo region of Somalia, exemplifies this context.

In regions like Beledhawa District, where poverty, limited infrastructure, and political instability present formidable barriers to progress, universities have the potential to serve as critical agents of change by producing skilled professionals in vital sectors such as healthcare, education, and management. However, there is insufficient empirical evidence detailing how institutions like GIU actively contribute to human capital development and, by extension, regional socio-economic growth. This study aims to bridge this knowledge gap by examining the role of GIU in fostering human capital investment within the Beledhawa District. Specifically, this research will explore how the university's programs and graduates have affected key sectors of the local economy and social services, as well as how these contributions translate into broader developmental outcomes for the region.

Importance of the study

This study focuses on Gedo International University (GIU), the only university in the Gedo region of Somalia, and its role in fostering human capital investment. By examining GIU's contributions to healthcare, education, and socio-economic development, the research highlights the importance of human capital investment in universities, particularly in developing regions. This study is significant as it highlights how higher education can drive regional growth, improve service delivery in critical sectors, and create economic opportunities, all of which are crucial for addressing the needs of underserved communities.

Research questions

The research questions guiding this study are:

1. How has Gedo International University (GIU) contributed to the development of the healthcare workforce in Beledhawa District?
2. How has GIU influenced the socio-economic growth of the Beledhawa District through its graduates?
3. What are the potential areas for GIU's expansion, that could further enhance human capital development in the region?
4. How does human capital investment (HCI) in universities, specifically GIU, contribute to the development of a skilled workforce and the overall socio-economic progress of Beledhawa District?
5. What challenges does GIU face in fully realizing its potential in HCI, and what strategies can be employed to overcome these barriers?

Objectives of the study

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To assess the impact of GIU on human capital development in the healthcare and education sectors.
2. To analyze how GIU's graduates have contributed to the socio-economic development of the Beledhawa District.
3. To explore potential areas for GIU's expansion into new academic fields that align with regional economic needs.
4. To evaluate the role of human capital investment in universities, with a focus on GIU's contributions to the local economy and workforce development.
5. To provide recommendations for strengthening GIU's role in human capital investment and enhancing its impact on regional development.

The Concept of Human Capital

Human capital refers to the attributes individuals gain through education, experience, and training that increase their productivity and value in the labor market. Investing in human capital through education, particularly at the university level, is crucial for preparing individuals to meet the demands of a rapidly changing global economy¹. Universities are at the forefront of this investment, offering programs that equip students with the necessary skills to excel in various professional fields.

Enhanced human capital leads to a more skilled labor force, which can drive innovation, improve efficiency, and contribute to the overall competitiveness of a nation in the global marketplace. Universities, therefore, act as incubators for talent, equipping students with the competencies required to adapt to technological advancements and evolving market needs. The impact of human capital investment is evident in the correlation between educational attainment and economic prosperity, where countries with higher levels of education tend to exhibit stronger financial performance.²

Moreover, the benefits of investing in human capital extend beyond economic gains. Education enhances individuals' problem-solving abilities, promotes civic engagement, and contributes to social cohesion, thereby improving the overall quality of life. For example, a well-educated population is better equipped to participate in democratic processes, make informed decisions, and contribute to the stability and development of their communities. Additionally, higher levels of education are associated with better health outcomes, as educated individuals are more likely to engage in health-promoting behaviors and access healthcare services.³

The Role of Universities in Human Capital Development

Universities serve as the primary institutions for higher education and research, playing a significant role in human capital development. They offer a diverse range of academic programs that cater to different fields of study, from the sciences to the humanities. By doing so, universities contribute to the development of a well-rounded workforce that can adapt to various sectors of the economy. Moreover, universities are instrumental in fostering critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills, which are essential for innovation and progress in any society.⁴

Human capital investment in universities is a cornerstone for cultivating a knowledgeable and skilled workforce capable of driving economic growth and fostering social development. Universities play an indispensable role in human capital development by offering education, training, and research opportunities that enhance individuals' skills, knowledge, and competencies. The significance of human capital investment in higher education is profound, as it not only improves productivity and innovation but also contributes to the overall well-being of society.⁵

Universities are uniquely positioned to shape the intellectual and professional capacities of students, preparing them to meet the demands of a rapidly evolving global economy. By providing a diverse range of academic programs and fostering an environment of critical thinking, creativity, and problem solving, universities contribute to the development of a well-rounded and adaptable workforce. This, in turn, is essential for sustaining economic competitiveness and addressing complex societal challenges (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2004).⁶

Economic Impact of University Education

The economic impact of university education is profound. Graduates with higher education degrees typically

¹ Becker, G. S. (1993). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education* (3rd ed.). University of Chicago Press.

² Schultz, T. W. (1961). Investment in human capital. *The American Economic Review*, 51(1), 1-17.

³ Psacharopoulos, G., & Patrinos, H. A. (2018). Returns to investment in education: A decennial review of the global literature. *Education Economics*, 26(5), 445-458.

⁴ Schultz, T. W. (1961). Investment in human capital. *The American Economic Review*, 51(1), 1-17

⁵ Psacharopoulos, G., & Patrinos, H. A. (2004). Returns to investment in education: A further update. *Education Economics*, 12(2), 111-134.

⁶ Psacharopoulos, G., & Patrinos, H. A. (138-139)

earn higher wages, experience lower unemployment rates, and contribute more to the economy through taxes and consumption⁷.

Moretti's⁸ *The New Geography of Jobs* (2012) explores how economic growth and job creation are increasingly concentrated in specific geographic areas, particularly those with higher levels of education and innovation. The book highlights the role that universities play in fostering high-skill industries, boosting local economies, and creating a ripple effect where educated workers attract businesses, which in turn leads to more job opportunities. Moretti emphasizes that the presence of universities and a highly educated workforce is critical in shaping the economic landscape, enhancing regional productivity, and fostering long-term economic sustainability.⁹

In summary, universities not only equip individuals with the skills and knowledge needed for personal economic advancement but also act as critical drivers of regional and national economic development, fostering innovation, entrepreneurship, and social mobility.

Challenges in Human Capital Investment in Universities

Despite the recognized importance of investing in human capital through university education, there are several challenges that institutions face. One of the primary challenges is the availability of resources. Many universities, especially in developing countries, struggle with inadequate funding, which affects their ability to provide quality education and maintain infrastructure¹⁰. This underfunding can lead to overcrowded classrooms, outdated equipment, and insufficient faculty, all of which hinder the effectiveness of education.

Another significant challenge is the accessibility of higher education. In many parts of the world, especially in developing regions, access to university education is limited by factors such as economic barriers, geographic location, and social inequalities. These challenges often result in a lower enrollment rate in higher education institutions, thereby limiting the potential for human capital development¹¹.

Institutional Overview of Gedo International University (GIU)

Background and Establishment

Gedo International University (GIU) was established in 2015 to address the educational needs of both local and international students in the Gedo region of Somalia. It is the first and only university in the region, playing a crucial role in providing higher education and fostering socio-economic development. Since its inception, GIU has become a beacon of learning in the Beldhawa District, offering a variety of programs and contributing to the region's human capital development.

Gedo International University (GIU) was established in 2015 as a response to the growing demand for higher education in the Gedo region of Somalia. The university was founded by a group of well-wishers and academic scholars under the auspices of the Alrahma Foundation for Education and Development.

The Alrahmah Foundation for Education and Development is a Somali-based charity organization founded by the diaspora community around the globe to help less fortunate people back home in the areas of education, health, and water shortage.

With its main office in Mogadishu, Alrahmah is registered with the Somali federal government and concentrates its work in the Southern regions of the country, where international and local charities are absent due to security reasons. Alrahmah members on the ground are handling these challenges and have carried out

⁷ Psacharopoulos, G., & Patrinos, H. A. (2004). Returns to investment in education: A further update. *Education Economics*, 12(2), 111-134.

⁸ Enrico Moretti is an Italian economist and Professor of Economics at the University of California, Berkeley.

⁹ Moretti, E. (2012). *The new geography of jobs*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

¹⁰ World Bank. (2017). *Higher education in developing countries: Peril and promise*. World Bank

¹¹ UNESCO. (2015). *The Role of Higher Education in Sustainable Development*. UNESCO Publishing.

successful projects since the Foundation's inception in 2014.¹²

Overview of Faculties and Programs

Since its inception, GIU has offered various programs through its five active faculties:

- **Faculty of Shareah and Law:** This faculty specializes in the study of Islamic law (Shariah) and legal studies, offering comprehensive programs that prepare graduates for diverse roles in legal practice, religious leadership, and public service. The curriculum is designed to equip students with a deep understanding of both classical and contemporary legal frameworks, enabling them to serve as judges, lawyers, religious scholars, and advisors in various sectors. Graduates from this faculty are not only well-versed in the principles of Islamic jurisprudence but also trained to navigate the complexities of modern legal systems. The faculty plays a crucial role in shaping ethical and informed leaders who contribute significantly to the legal and moral fabric of the community.
- **Faculty of Health Sciences:** This faculty offers a range of programs in health-related fields, including nursing, public health, and medical sciences, training professionals who are integral to the healthcare system. Many of the healthcare workers in Beledhawa are either currently enrolled in or have graduated from this faculty. I had the opportunity to meet Shafi' Adam, a 24-year-old nurse at Shifa Hospital, who is graduating from GIU this year. Shafi' expressed how his education at GIU significantly increased his knowledge and made him more skilled and active in his profession. Additionally, I encountered several midwifery graduates from GIU who are working in shifts at the General Hospital. The hospital management praised GIU students as some of the best nurses and health workers, noting their significant impact on improving district healthcare. Furthermore, some of the female graduates from this faculty have successfully secured positions in international NGOs after excelling in competitive exams, demonstrating the high caliber of training provided by GIU.
- **Faculty of Economic & Management Science:** This faculty offers comprehensive education in business administration, economics, and management, equipping students with the skills needed for successful careers in both the public and private sectors. The faculty has become a vital training ground for many of the region's banking professionals, including managers and staff from prominent financial institutions. For instance, Mr. Dahir, a 67-year-old project manager at Amal Bank's Beledhawa branch, which is one of the largest banks in Somalia, is currently enrolled in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences. His commitment to furthering his education, despite an already distinguished career, highlights the faculty's reputation for providing valuable, industry-relevant knowledge. The programs offered prepare students for immediate entry into the workforce and enhance the capabilities of seasoned professionals, contributing significantly to economic growth and management efficiency in the region.
- **Faculty of Information and Communication Technology (ICT):** The Faculty of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) at Gedo International University plays a crucial role in preparing students for the rapidly evolving digital landscape. This faculty offers programs focused on software development, networking, Web development, and data science, equipping students with essential skills to thrive in a technology-driven world.

As technology continues to reshape industries and economies globally, GIU recognizes the urgent need to enhance its ICT programs. The faculty's graduates can make significant contributions to the local tech ecosystem. The emphasis on practical training is a cornerstone of the ICT curriculum at GIU. The university has invested in a starting art laboratory, providing students with hands-on experience that mirrors real-world challenges.

- **Faculty of Education and Social Science:** This faculty is dedicated to the comprehensive training of educators and social scientists, offering robust programs in education, sociology, and social work. The

¹²⁾ Alrahmah Foundation for Education and Development. (n.d.). *About us*. Retrieved August 18, 2024, from <http://alrahmahfoundation.com/about-us/>

faculty is instrumental in shaping the region's educational landscape, as a significant number of district and regional teachers are enrolled in its programs. Through a curriculum that blends theoretical knowledge with practical application, the faculty equips future educators and social scientists with the skills and expertise necessary to address the complex social and educational challenges within the community. The impact of this faculty extends beyond the university, contributing to the overall improvement of educational standards and social welfare in the Gedo region.

These faculties provide comprehensive education, equipping students with the skills and knowledge necessary for their professional and personal development. Through rigorous academic programs, practical training, and a focus on ethical values, these faculties prepare students to excel in their chosen fields while also fostering critical thinking, leadership, and social responsibility. The holistic education offered ensures that graduates are not only proficient in their professional roles but also well-rounded individuals capable of making meaningful contributions to their communities and society at large.

Building a Skilled Education Workforce: The Role of Human Capital Investment in Universities

Definition and Importance

Human capital investment is the process of improving individuals' skills, knowledge, and competencies, which are critical for enhancing their productivity and economic value. In the context of higher education, this investment is vital as it directly influences the quality of education, research, and the overall development of a region. According to Becker (1964), education is a cornerstone of human capital, as it equips individuals with the necessary tools to participate effectively in the economy and contribute to societal growth.¹³

The importance of human capital investment in universities cannot be overstated. A well-educated population is a crucial driver of economic growth, as it leads to higher levels of productivity and innovation. Moreover, universities play a pivotal role in research and development, which contributes to technological advancements and the creation of new industries. These advancements, fueled by human capital, can lead to significant improvements in living standards and societal well-being.¹⁴

In developing regions, the impact of human capital investment through universities is even more pronounced. Universities help bridge the gap between developing and developed economies by equipping students with the skills and knowledge necessary to participate in the global economy. This not only benefits the individuals who receive the education but also has a multiplier effect on the community and nation as a whole. The returns on investment in education, particularly higher education, are substantial, leading to increased income levels, improved health outcomes, and greater social mobility¹⁵.

Furthermore, universities serve as hubs for innovation and entrepreneurship, providing the necessary environment and resources for students and faculty to develop new ideas and businesses. This entrepreneurial spirit, nurtured within the university setting, is a key component of economic development and job creation. As such, investment in universities is not just an investment in individual human capital, but also in the broader economic and social fabric of society¹⁶.

The Role of Universities in Education Sector Improvement

Universities play a key role in the education sector by supporting high schools and opening new schools, particularly in underserved areas. This expansion improves access to education, enabling more students to qualify for higher education. In developing regions, universities act as educational hubs, driving the establishment of secondary schools and enhancing human capital development by ensuring students receive

¹³ Becker, G. S. (1964). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis, with special reference to education*. University of Chicago Press.

¹⁴ Schultz, T. W. (1961). *Investment in human capital*. *The American Economic Review*, (1).

¹⁵ Psacharopoulos, G., & Patrinos, H. A. (2018). *Returns to investment in education: A decennial review of the global literature*. Education Economics, 26.

¹⁶ Hanushek, E. A., & Woessmann, L. (2020). *The economic impacts of learning losses*. OECD Education Working Papers, No. 225.

quality education.¹⁷

In the case of Beledhawa, Before the establishment of Gedo International University (GIU) in 2015, Beledhawa lacked secondary schools, and the region's educational infrastructure was underdeveloped. Students had to cross the border into Mandera County, Kenya, to attend primary and secondary school. Hundreds of students, including myself, made this daily journey between Beledhawa and Mandera, which significantly affected our education experience. However, the presence of a university in Beledhawa has changed this dynamic, improving local access to education and reducing the need for students to leave the region for schooling. The establishment of GIU provided a strong incentive for the development of secondary education in Beledhawa. Local communities, recognizing the value of higher education, began to establish secondary schools, ensuring that students could continue their education beyond the primary level. This development has had a profound impact on the region, as it has increased access to education and improved educational outcomes for students in Beledhawa. However, with the opening of GIU, secondary schools began to emerge, providing a pathway for students to continue their education locally. This development highlights the critical role that universities play in driving educational progress and inspiring communities to invest in their future.

Human capital investment is a foundational concept in understanding economic growth and development. It refers to the process of improving the skills, knowledge, and health of individuals to enhance their productivity and economic value. Education is a critical component of this investment, as it provides individuals with the necessary competencies to participate effectively in the labor market.¹⁸⁾ The concept of human capital was first introduced by economists like Adam Smith, but it was further developed by scholars such as Becker (1964), who emphasized the importance of education in economic development. According to Becker (1964), investing in education is one of the most effective ways to improve an individual's economic prospects and contribute to broader societal growth.¹⁹

Overall, the role of universities in human capital investment is multifaceted and critical to both individual and societal advancement. Through the provision of quality education, research opportunities, and a supportive environment for innovation, universities contribute significantly to the development of a skilled workforce capable of driving economic growth and social progress.

In the context of developing regions like Gedo, human capital investment through education is particularly important. These regions often face significant challenges, including poverty, limited access to resources, and political instability. By investing in education, these regions can create a more skilled and knowledgeable workforce, which is essential for driving economic growth and reducing poverty. Moreover, education plays a crucial role in promoting social mobility, enabling individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to improve their socio-economic status.

The Socio-Economic Impact of Gedo International University

Gedo International University (GIU) has significantly contributed to the socio-economic development of the Gedo region. By providing accessible higher education, GIU has empowered local communities, fostering a sense of ownership and pride. The university's graduates are not only employed within the region but are also active in shaping the local economy. For example, GIU alumni are involved in various sectors such as healthcare, education, and business, driving innovation and improving service delivery. This contribution is critical in a region that has historically faced challenges related to poverty, limited infrastructure, and political instability.

GIU's investment in human capital is evidenced by its role in equipping professionals in high-demand sectors like healthcare and education. The university has significantly increased the number of qualified teachers and

¹⁷⁾ Johnson, L. (2018). The role of higher education institutions in supporting secondary school development. *Journal of Educational Policy and Administration*, 23(4), 24-25.

¹⁸⁾ Smith, A. (1776). *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*. W. Strahan and T. Cadell.

¹⁹⁾ Becker, G. S. (1964). *Human Capital: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis, with Special Reference to Education*. The University of Chicago Press.

healthcare workers in Beledhawa District, addressing key workforce shortages. This development has improved the socio-economic standing of the region and contributed to regional stability through better health and education outcomes.

GIU's commitment to quality education and community engagement has had a profound socio-economic impact on the Beledhawa District and the wider Gedo region. As GIU is the only university in the region, it has provided an invaluable opportunity for families with limited resources to keep their children close to home for higher education. This has had two significant effects:

1. **Cost Savings:** Families no longer need to send their children to faraway cities like Mogadishu for higher education, saving significant amounts of money.
2. **Increased Access to Education:** The availability of a local university has allowed many students who might not have pursued higher education due to financial constraints to continue their studies. This has led to a significant increase in the educational attainment of the region's population.

These developments have directly contributed to the socio-economic advancement of the Gedo region. GIU's focus on producing graduates who are well-prepared to meet the needs of the local market has ensured that these individuals play a crucial role in the region's growth. For instance, many GIU graduates are employed in the local healthcare and education sectors, where their contributions are vital to improving the quality of services available to the community.

In my interviews with GIU graduates, I explored how their education at the university enhanced their capabilities and professionalism in their respective fields. Abdiqafaar Ali, now a pharmacist, shared that the comprehensive curriculum and practical training at GIU significantly broadened his pharmaceutical knowledge and skills, enabling him to serve the community more effectively. Aisha Abdirahman and Fardowsa Sh. Ahmed, both midwives at Khalil Hospital (Beledhawa General Hospital), emphasized how the hands-on experience and supportive faculty at GIU prepared them for the challenges of their profession, making them confident and competent healthcare providers.²⁰

The Impact of GIU on the Local Community and Healthcare Services

The experiences shared by Abdiqafaar Ali, Aisha Abdirahman, and Fardowsa Sh. Ahmed highlights the significant role that Gedo International University plays in not only educating its students but also indirectly contributing to the socio-economic development of Beledhawa District. The increased availability of qualified healthcare professionals has profoundly impacted local healthcare services, particularly in a region where such services were previously scarce.

The presence of well-trained pharmacists and midwives, among other healthcare professionals, has improved the overall quality of care available to the community. This, in turn, has led to better health outcomes, higher patient satisfaction, and a stronger healthcare system capable of addressing the needs of the local population. The university's commitment to practical, hands-on education ensures that graduates are not only knowledgeable but also equipped to handle real-world challenges, making them invaluable assets to the local healthcare infrastructure.

During my interview with Abdiqafaar Ali, he shared valuable insights into how his education at Gedo International University (GIU) significantly enhanced his skills in healthcare service and pharmaceutical knowledge. He expressed that his time at GIU made him more skilled and confident in his professional role as

²⁰ In examining the socio-economic impact of Gedo International University (GIU), this research uses Health Science graduates as a representative example. This focus is not intended to minimize the contributions of graduates from other faculties but to highlight the particularly significant impact of Health Science graduates due to their involvement in addressing a critical gap in medical services in Beledhawa District. Prior to the establishment of GIU and the graduation of these students, medical services were notably limited in the region. The Health Science graduates have notably enhanced the local health infrastructure and improved community health outcomes, reflecting the substantial role of GIU in addressing local needs through specialized training. This example illustrates the broader socio-economic impact of GIU, demonstrating the university's contribution to both academic excellence and community development.

a pharmacist. We delved into his thesis project, which focused on Hepatitis B and related health issues. Abdiqafaar demonstrated a thorough understanding of his research topic, showcasing his ability to apply research methodologies and best practices effectively. This discussion highlighted that GIU's curriculum extends beyond the core health sciences, equipping students with strong research skills essential for academic and professional success.

Abdiqafaar's confidence and satisfaction with GIU were evident as he spoke highly of the university's capabilities and the support provided by the faculty members. He emphasized that the knowledge and skills he gained at GIU have not only improved his professional competence but also positively impacted his personal and family income, as well as his social status. His experience underscores the broader benefits of higher education at GIU, illustrating how the university fosters comprehensive development in its students, both professionally and personally.²¹

The next student I interviewed was Aisha Abdirahman Osman, a 23-year-old midwife working at Khalil Hospital. Aisha shared that she had always been passionate about becoming a healthcare professional, and Gedo International University (GIU) played a crucial role in turning that dream into reality. When I asked her about the financial aspects of attending the university, Aisha expressed that the affordable tuition fees and the convenience of having a campus in her hometown made it possible for her to pursue a degree in Health Sciences. Without GIU, she might not have been able to achieve her goal of becoming a midwife.

Aisha also mentioned that her experience at GIU has made her more confident and deeply committed to her profession. She recounted numerous cases she handles daily as a midwife, emphasizing how the knowledge and skills she acquired at GIU enable her to assist patients effectively. Our conversation then turned to her thesis, which focuses on diabetes. She was in the final stages of preparing for her thesis defense, scheduled for the day after our interview. Aisha's story is a testament to the significant impact that GIU has on its students, providing them with both the education and the confidence needed to succeed in their careers.²²

During my interviews, I had the opportunity to speak with graduates of Gedo International University (GIU) to understand how their education impacted their careers. Fardowsa Sheikh Ahmed, a midwife at Khalil Hospital, emphasized the pivotal role GIU played in nurturing her passion for healthcare. She expressed gratitude for the support from Dr. Ahmed Abdiqani, Dean of Health Sciences, particularly during her thesis development on hypertension, a critical health issue often overlooked in the community. Fardowsa noted that her research was motivated by the lack of awareness surrounding this condition. She highlighted that her experience at GIU enhanced her knowledge and skills and fueled her ambition to pursue a master's degree. Fardowsa's appreciation for GIU's supportive environment underscores the university's significant role in empowering healthcare professionals in the region.²³

Empowering Professionals: The Impact of GIU Education on Careers and Community Leadership

In this chapter, we explore the transformative power of education provided by Gedo International University and its significant impact on the professional lives of its graduates. Through a series of interviews with students currently enrolled in the Faculty of Education and Social Sciences, as well as the Faculty of Economic and Management Science, we gain a deeper understanding of how their education has shaped their careers and contributed to the development of the local community.

The students and alumni of GIU have transitioned into vital roles within the community, serving as headteachers, teachers, school administrators, bank staff, and management professionals. Their stories highlight the practical application of the knowledge and skills they acquired at GIU, demonstrating how higher education can drive both personal growth and community advancement.

These interviews reveal not only the academic benefits of their education but also the social and economic ripple effects of having well-trained professionals in key positions. Whether in workplaces or classrooms, the

²¹) A. Ali, personal communication, 20th August, 2024

²²) A. Osman, personal communication, 21st August, 2024

²³) F. Sheikh, Personal communication, 21st August, 2024

graduates of GIU are making a profound difference in Beledhawa District, leading initiatives that foster educational excellence and financial stability. As we delve into their experiences, we see the broader impact of GIU's programs on human capital investment and regional development, underscoring the university's critical role in shaping the future of the community. Their educational experiences have not only equipped them with the necessary skills but also empowered them to take on critical roles that contribute to the region's socio-economic development.

Take, for example, Abdiqadir Hassan Abdullahi, a 25-year-old Customer Care Officer at Amal Bank's Beledhawa branch. Currently enrolled in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences at GIU, Abdiqadir shared how his education played a pivotal role in securing his position. After competing in a rigorous examination process in Kismayo, where he was up against several seasoned professionals, Abdiqadir credited his success to the comprehensive training he received at GIU. He acknowledged that after Allah's power, the knowledge and skills acquired through his studies were instrumental in helping him stand out among the candidates.

Abdiqadir elaborated on how specific courses, such as Communication Skills and Human Resource Management (HRM), significantly enhanced his capabilities. These courses equipped him with the tools to effectively manage customer relationships, address conflicts, and improve overall customer satisfaction in his role at Amal Bank. His education at GIU not only prepared him for the challenges of the professional world but also instilled in him a sense of confidence and competence that he now applies in his daily work, benefiting both his career and the community he serves.²⁴

Another interviewed student, SayidAli Adan Mohamed, currently serving as the head teacher of War-Adey Primary School, shared insights into how his education at GIU's Faculty of Education and Social Sciences has profoundly shaped his professional journey. Mr. Sayid spoke about how the skills and knowledge he gained, particularly in teaching methodologies, lesson preparation, and classroom management, have significantly enhanced his effectiveness as an educator. Beyond his teaching role, his leadership capabilities, honed through the university's focus on school management and educational leadership, have also seen substantial growth. These improvements have positively impacted the development of human capital in the district, as his problem-solving skills and decision-making abilities have been strengthened, enabling him to lead his school more effectively and contribute to the broader educational landscape.²⁵

In a similar vein, I met with Abdifatah Mohammed, the principal of Alqalam Primary and Secondary School, who is enrolled in GIU's Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences. Abdifatah echoed many of Mr. Sayid's sentiments, emphasizing how his studies have significantly enhanced his leadership and management skills. He noted that the training he received has been instrumental in his ability to oversee both academic and administrative functions within his school.²⁶ This reflects a broader trend of how GIU's academic programs are influencing Human Capital Investment (HCI) within the education and market sectors in Beledhawa District.

Both examples illustrate the critical role that GIU plays in empowering its students not just with knowledge, but with the practical skills needed to lead and innovate in their respective fields. The influence of GIU extends beyond individual careers, driving broader socio-economic development within the district by enhancing the capabilities of those who are shaping the future of education and the economy.

Challenges and Areas for Improvement

While Gedo International University (GIU) has made substantial contributions to the socio-economic development of the Gedo region, it has also faced criticism from educators and community members for not offering key academic programs, particularly in Veterinary Medicine and Agriculture. These faculties are crucial in a region where livestock and agriculture are the backbone of the local economy. The absence of such programs has raised concerns that GIU is not fully addressing the educational and developmental needs of the community, particularly in sectors vital to the region's livelihood and economic stability.

²⁴) A. Hassan, personal communication, 22nd August, 2024

²⁵) S. Adan, personal communication, 23rd August, 2024

²⁶) A. Mohammed, personal communication, 23rd, August 2024

GIU's management, when asked about these gaps, acknowledged the importance of these faculties and confirmed that their establishment is part of the university's long-term strategic plan. However, they cited budgetary constraints and insufficient funding as the primary reasons for the delay. As a relatively young institution, founded in 2015, GIU has focused its resources on developing its core faculties and ensuring the quality of its existing programs before expanding into new fields.²⁷

Although these financial limitations are understandable, the absence of Veterinary and Agricultural programs remains a significant issue. Addressing this gap is critical for GIU's future growth and solidifying its role as a comprehensive institution that meets the region's diverse needs. Expanding into these fields would not only contribute to local economic development but also enhance GIU's reputation as an essential educational hub for the Gedo region.

Despite these understandable financial challenges, the lack of key academic programs and the absence of branches in other districts remain significant issues for the university's future growth. Addressing these concerns is crucial for GIU to fulfill its mission of serving the entire Gedo region and ensuring equitable access to higher education. Expanding its academic offerings and geographical reach would enhance local economic development and solidify GIU's position as a regional leader in higher education.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative case study approach to explore the role of Gedo International University (GIU) in human capital investment and its impact on the socio-economic development of Beledhawa District. The methodology is designed to provide an in-depth understanding of how higher education at GIU contributes to individual career growth, community development, and regional economic performance.

Research Design

A case study methodology was chosen for this research to examine the specific context of GIU and its influence on human capital development. This approach allows for a detailed examination of real-life events and their impact on various stakeholders, including students, faculty, and the local community.

Data Collection

Data collection for this research consists of two primary methods:

Interviews: Semi-structured interviews were conducted with current students, graduates, and faculty members of GIU to gain insights into their educational experiences and professional outcomes. Key informants included healthcare professionals, educators, and banking personnel who were directly impacted by their studies at GIU. This allowed for a rich collection of qualitative data that reflects personal experiences and professional growth. Interviews focused on how their education enhanced their skills, professionalism, and contributions to their fields.

Document Analysis: Institutional documents such as university reports, curriculum outlines, and faculty profiles were reviewed to understand GIU's academic structure and programs. Additionally, socio-economic reports and district-level statistics were examined to assess GIU's broader impact on regional development.

Sample Selection

The research sample includes:

Graduates and current students from the Faculty of Health Sciences, the Faculty of Education and Social Science, and the Faculty of Economic and Management Science. These participants were selected based on their current professional roles in the community, particularly in healthcare, education, and banking sectors.

University faculty and administration to gain perspectives on the curriculum, faculty development programs,

²⁷⁾ Dr. A. Hussein, University Rector, personal communication, 5th, October 2024

and the university's strategy for contributing to human capital investment in the region.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was used to identify key themes emerging from the interviews and documents. The data were categorized under major themes such as:

Human capital development through higher education: How GIU's educational programs contribute to skill enhancement and professional competence.

Socio-economic impact: The influence of GIU graduates on the economic and social development of Beledhawa District, particularly in sectors like healthcare, education, and banking.

Challenges and opportunities: Barriers to human capital development at GIU include financial constraints, accessibility, resource availability, and opportunities for growth in education and infrastructure.

Ethical Considerations

All participants were informed of the purpose of the research and their consent was obtained before interviews were conducted. Confidentiality was assured, and all responses were anonymized to protect the identities of participants. The research was conducted under ethical guidelines for academic research, ensuring respect for participants' privacy and well-being.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

While substantial financial investment from the federal government may not be feasible at this time, the government can still play a crucial role in the development of Gedo International University (GIU) through policy-making and targeted logistical support. These actions can significantly contribute to the university's growth without placing excessive strain on the national budget.

Policy-Making and Strategic Planning

The federal and state governments can prioritize higher education by enacting policies that support the long-term development of institutions like GIU. This could include policies aimed at:

- **Improving Accessibility:** Creating policies that encourage universities to develop partnerships with NGOs and the private sector to fund critical projects such as infrastructure development, faculty training, and student support services.
- **Educational Partnerships:** Facilitating partnerships between GIU and other universities or research institutions, both nationally and internationally, to improve academic collaboration, research funding, and faculty development.

Partnerships with International and Local NGOs

NGOs—both international and local—can provide valuable resources and expertise that contribute to the growth of higher education institutions. GIU could benefit greatly from collaborations with educational NGOs, especially in sectors that directly impact the local economy.

- **Scholarships and Financial Aid:** NGOs should establish scholarship programs for students pursuing degrees in Public health, Nursing and Midwives, and other key fields that are crucial for regional development. These scholarships would enable more students to enroll in programs that directly contribute to the economic stability of the region.
- **Faculty Training Programs:** Educational NGOs can also facilitate professional development for faculty members by sponsoring training workshops, conferences, and exchange programs with other

universities. This will help build local teaching capacity in specialized fields and improve the quality of education offered at GIU.

Research Initiatives and Collaboration Opportunities with NGOs

NGOs can play a pivotal role in fostering research initiatives that address critical issues in the Gedo region, particularly by collaborating with Gedo International University (GIU) students and researchers. These partnerships can focus on data collection, analysis, and conducting valuable research that benefits various sectors in the region. Such initiatives address local challenges and provide GIU students and faculty with the opportunity to contribute meaningfully to regional development through informed decision-making and evidence-based solutions.

Areas of Collaboration:

Health and Public Policy Research:

NGOs can collaborate with GIU's Faculty of Health Sciences to research pressing healthcare issues such as disease prevention, maternal and child health, and public health interventions. This collaboration could involve:

- ❖ **Data Collection and Analysis:** Students and faculty can work with NGOs to collect and analyze healthcare data, improving understanding of local health trends, service delivery gaps, and community health outcomes. This research would directly inform public health strategies and policies in the region.
- ❖ **Research on Healthcare Systems:** Investigating the efficiency of local healthcare systems, particularly in rural or underserved areas, could identify areas for improvement and highlight best practices for delivering healthcare more effectively.

Education Sector Research:

NGOs can partner with GIU's Faculty of Education and Social Sciences to conduct research aimed at improving educational outcomes in the Gedo region. Collaborative projects could focus on:

- ❖ **Student Performance and Curriculum Development:** Through data-driven research, NGOs can help assess student performance and the effectiveness of current educational methodologies, suggesting reforms or new approaches to enhance learning outcomes.
- ❖ **Access to Education:** Research initiatives could focus on understanding the barriers to education in the region, such as socio-economic factors, and developing strategies to improve school enrollment and retention rates.

Economic and Developmental Research:

NGOs can engage students from the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences in conducting research that provides insights into the economic challenges and opportunities within the region. NGOs can support research that examines the development of small businesses, the role of entrepreneurship in economic growth, and barriers to market entry for local entrepreneurs.

Building Research Capacity:

In addition to these sector-specific collaborations, NGOs can assist GIU in building research capacity by providing training workshops on data collection methodologies, statistical analysis, and academic writing. These efforts will not only strengthen the university's research output but also equip students and faculty with essential skills that they can apply to future research endeavors.

By focusing on data collection and analysis in critical sectors such as health, education, and economics, NGOs

and GIU can form valuable partnerships that lead to tangible improvements in the region. These collaborative research efforts will ensure that both students and faculty at GIU contribute to solving real-world challenges while developing their professional skills and enhancing their academic experience.

By working closely with GIU, NGOs can ensure that the university's academic offerings remain relevant and aligned with the developmental needs of the region.

Private Sector Engagement

Engaging private sector stakeholders, particularly those in education, healthcare, finance, and business management, is a crucial strategy for supporting Gedo International University and enhancing its relevance to the local economy. By collaborating with these industries, GIU can ensure that its programs remain aligned with market demands, thereby boosting the employability of its graduates and contributing to regional socio-economic development.

Research Funding and Partnerships

Private companies in sectors such as healthcare, banking, education, and business management can provide funding for applied research initiatives that align with their industry needs. These partnerships offer several benefits:

- **Healthcare Research:** Private hospitals, clinics, and pharmaceutical companies can partner with GIU's Faculty of Health Sciences to fund research on healthcare delivery, public health interventions, and medical technologies. This collaboration can result in innovative healthcare solutions and enhance the practical knowledge of students through hands-on research projects.
- **Business and Finance Research:** Financial institutions, such as banks and microfinance organizations, can collaborate with the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences to research economic development, financial inclusion, and entrepreneurship. This would help companies understand local markets better and provide students with practical research opportunities that address real-world economic challenges.
- **Education Research:** Private educational institutions and NGOs focused on education can work with GIU's Faculty of Education to fund research into curriculum development, teacher training, and educational technology. This research would aim to improve local educational standards and equip students with the tools to tackle education sector challenges.

Internship and Job Placement Programs

Establishing internship and apprenticeship programs in collaboration with local businesses and industries would provide GIU students with valuable practical experience while they are still studying. These programs could focus on:

- **Healthcare Internships:** Hospitals, health clinics, and NGOs can offer internships to Health Sciences students, giving them hands-on experience in patient care, public health initiatives, and clinical research. This would ensure that students graduate with the skills and confidence needed to contribute effectively to the healthcare system.
- **Business and Financial Sector Internships:** Banks, insurance companies, and small business enterprises can offer internships to students from the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences. These internships could focus on areas such as customer service, financial analysis, and management, equipping students with the practical skills they need to thrive in the workforce.
- **Education Sector Internships:** Private schools, educational NGOs, and government education departments can offer teaching placements and administrative internships to students in the Faculty of Education. These opportunities would allow students to apply their teaching methodologies and

classroom management skills in real-world settings, preparing them for roles as teachers, administrators, or education policy experts.

This collaboration could lead to immediate job placements for graduates, reducing unemployment and filling gaps in the local workforce. Students who gain practical experience during their studies will be better equipped to transition into full-time roles upon graduation.

Sponsorship of Educational Programs

Private companies in healthcare, finance, and education can sponsor specialized courses or workshops tailored to the needs of their industries. This collaboration can lead to the development of industry-relevant curricula that directly prepare students for the job market. For example:

- **Healthcare Workshops:** Hospitals and health organizations could sponsor workshops on topics such as healthcare management, public health awareness, and patient care best practices. These courses would ensure that Health Sciences graduates are well-prepared to address the specific needs of the local healthcare industry.
- **Business and Finance Courses:** Financial institutions can sponsor courses or seminars on topics such as financial literacy, entrepreneurship, or digital banking. These programs would create a pipeline of skilled graduates who are ready to work in banking and financial services, helping to strengthen the region's economic infrastructure.
- **Education Enhancement Programs:** Educational NGOs and private schools can sponsor teacher training programs, workshops on curriculum design, and educational leadership courses for students in the Faculty of Education. This would improve the quality of education in the region by preparing graduates to take on leadership roles in schools and education reform initiatives.

By forging close ties with the private sector in these fields, GIU can ensure that its programs are closely aligned with industry needs. This alignment will not only make its graduates more employable but also strengthen the university's role in regional economic development by producing well-trained professionals who can meet the demands of local industries.

Development of branch Campuses

Given the geographical spread of the Gedo region and the economic difficulties many families face in relocating to Beledhawa for higher education, establishing satellite campuses in other districts would significantly improve access to education.

- **Regional Expansion Plan:** The state government, in partnership with educational NGOs and private stakeholders, should explore funding models for establishing GIU branches in other districts, such as Garbaharey, Dollow Luuk, and Bardhere. These campuses could initially offer diploma and certificate programs in critical fields such as agriculture, education, and business administration, with the possibility of expanding into full-degree programs over time.
- **Technology-Enhanced Learning:** In districts where it may not be feasible to establish full campuses, GIU could develop distance learning programs, utilizing online platforms to deliver courses to students in remote areas. This would not only reduce the financial burden on students but also ensure that education is accessible to a wider population.
- **Outreach Programs:** branch campuses could also serve as community outreach hubs, providing workshops and short courses tailored to the needs of the local population. This could include farmer training programs, veterinary clinics, and other initiatives that directly impact the local economy. By expanding geographically, GIU can ensure that more students have the opportunity to pursue higher education without the need to relocate, thus contributing to the long-term development of the entire region.

Faculty Development and Retention

The success of any academic institution depends heavily on the quality of its faculty. To ensure that GIU can attract and retain high-quality educators, the government, NGOs, and the university itself must focus on faculty development.

- **Research Collaboration:** Encouraging faculty members to engage in research collaborations with other universities and institutions, both locally and internationally, will enhance the quality of education at GIU. Faculty members should be given opportunities to publish their research and present at academic conferences, further raising the profile of GIU.
- **Competitive Compensation:** Offering competitive salaries and benefits packages, including housing and health benefits, will be critical for retaining top talent. Retention efforts should also focus on creating a supportive and stimulating academic environment, where faculty members are encouraged to innovate and pursue research interests that align with the region's development goals.

Strengthening faculty development programs will ensure that GIU continues to offer high-quality education and remains a leader in human capital development for the Gedo region.

Actionable Recommendations:

To further strengthen its role in human capital development, GIU should focus on the following key recommendations:

- ⌘ **Expand into agriculture and veterinary sciences:** Given that agriculture and livestock are critical to the region's economy, GIU should establish faculties or programs in these areas. This would align the university's offerings with the needs of the local economy and address workforce shortages in these sectors.
- ⌘ **Establish satellite campuses in underserved districts:** Expanding GIU's reach by opening satellite campuses in districts like Garbaharey and Bardhere would improve access to higher education for more students, especially those unable to relocate to Beledhawa. This would reduce financial burdens on families and increase regional educational attainment.
- ⌘ **Increase partnerships with NGOs and the private sector:** By collaborating with NGOs and local industries, GIU can secure additional resources for scholarships, faculty development, and research. These partnerships can also create internship and job placement opportunities for students, enhancing their practical experience and employability.
- ⌘ **Enhance the Faculty of Information and Communication Technology (ICT):** As the world increasingly relies on technology, GIU must prioritize improvements in its ICT programs. By investing in state-of-the-art laboratories and innovative teaching methods, GIU can position itself as a tech hub in the region. Fostering a strong ICT faculty will prepare students for the demands of the modern workforce and encourage innovation, ensuring that the university remains relevant in an ever-evolving technological landscape.
- ⌘ **Increase research output:** One critical area for improvement at GIU involves the need for increased research output by faculty members and university institutions, particularly in fields such as education, socio-economic development, law, ICT, and Shareah studies. While the Faculty of Health Sciences has produced numerous impactful studies that have significantly contributed to local healthcare improvement, there is a noticeable gap in research conducted by other faculties. During this research, no documented reports or scholarly studies addressing the socio-economic challenges, education policies, or legal and Shareah studies related tensions to research on these pressing issues, offering evidence-based solutions to local challenges in the Gedo region and Beledhawa district.

This lack of research from the non-health faculties is a missed opportunity, as universities have a crucial

role in conducting studies that inform local development policies and address regional challenges. To strengthen GIU's impact on the Gedo region, the university should encourage and support interdisciplinary research initiatives that explore key issues affecting the region, such as educational reform, economic development, governance, and legal frameworks. Faculty members and students from these fields should be encouraged to produce research that identifies both challenges and opportunities within the region, offering evidence-based solutions for sustainable growth and development.

Establishing a university-wide research agenda that prioritizes these under-researched areas would enhance the institution's contribution to local development and ensure that GIU remains a leader in human capital investment across multiple sectors. Additionally, this would help align GIU's academic output with the broader socio-economic needs of the Gedo region, ensuring that the institution not only addresses healthcare concerns but also actively contributes to the region's governance, educational, and economic resilience.

SUMMARIZE KEY FINDINGS

Gedo International University (GIU) has played a transformative role in advancing the socio-economic through its role in human capital investment. In the healthcare sector, GIU's graduates, particularly in nursing, midwifery, and public health, have filled critical gaps in local healthcare services. Interviews with graduates like Abdiqafaar Ali and Aisha Abdirahman illustrate how the university's hands-on training and academic rigor have prepared healthcare professionals to address pressing health challenges in Beledhawa, improving both patient outcomes and the overall healthcare system.

In the education sector, GIU has played a pivotal role in developing the local teaching workforce. Many of the region's headteachers and teachers are GIU alumni, whose education in pedagogy and educational leadership has enhanced the quality of instruction and school management across the district. Through these improvements in healthcare and education, GIU has empowered local communities, improved access to essential services, and created new economic opportunities by retaining students and professionals within the region.

Overall, GIU's contributions have led to increased employment, improved services, and a boost in the region's socio-economic standing.

Emphasize Future Opportunities:

Looking forward, GIU has significant potential to grow its impact through new initiatives and programs. Expanding its academic offerings into critical fields such as agriculture and environmental studies would not only meet the local economy's demands but also attract a broader range of students. Additionally, there are opportunities to strengthen community outreach programs that focus on adult education, vocational training, and public health awareness, all of which would further integrate the university into the fabric of the region's development.

Future research should focus on assessing the long-term socio-economic impacts of GIU's graduates, particularly in sectors like healthcare, economics, and education, and explore ways the university can better align its programs with regional economic priorities. By continuing to innovate and respond to community needs, GIU can become a leading institution for human capital development in Jubbaland state of Somalia and a model for universities in other developing regions.

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