

Historical Influences on Students' Perceptions of the Teaching Profession in Somalia

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DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2024.803195S>

Received: 06 June 2024; Accepted: 22 June 2024; Published: 17 August 2024

ABSTRACT

The analysis in this paper focuses on the historical determinants of students' perceptions of the teaching profession in Somalia. It examines how colonial legacies, national reforms post-independence, and local socio-political instability have influenced the teachers' current positioning and societal representation of teachers. Teaching was once among the most respected professions in Somalia. However, recruitment drives during the colonial era and years of civil strife have undermined its status, transforming it from a dream career into a last resort. This paper identifies the critical historical influences that have shaped students' attitudes toward teaching by analyzing various academic sources, including books, articles, surveys, interviews, and observations. The results reveal that the colonial inheritance of broken educational systems, the lack of preparedness of the teaching workforce, poor remuneration, and poor terms of service are some of the reasons for the low image of the teaching profession. Additionally, the political instability and continuous socio-economic challenges have exacerbated these issues, leading to a further decline in the profession's appeal. The paper concludes by underlining the urgent need for systemic reforms affirming the profession's importance and ensuring that teaching attracts natural talent through high-quality teacher education, better compensation, and a national policy framework. These reforms matter for the quality of education and the long-term sustainability of the teaching profession in Somalia. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the necessity of community engagement and support to uplift the teaching profession. Building a robust support system for teachers, including professional development opportunities and improved working conditions, is crucial. Addressing historical grievances and promoting a positive image of the teaching profession can inspire a new generation of educators committed to transforming education in Somalia.

Keywords: Teachers, Teaching Profession, Education, Students, Historical Influences, Somalia

INTRODUCTION

Education remains a foundation for societal progress, building human capital and providing collaboration tools for a society's benefit. The teaching profession lies at the heart of all societies and is celebrated across the globe for its transformative impact on the next generation; at the same time, it also prepares the workforce for changes in technology and society as a whole while enabling individuals to participate in their communities in a more purposeful way (Androache, 2015). The evolution of teacher professionalism has been claimed to pass through four historical phases: pre-professional, autonomous, collegial, and now, in some quarters at least, post-professional or postmodern, with new goals and links with more significant social movements for the transformation of public education (Hargreaves, A. 2000).

However, in today's profession, the teaching profession looks very different, with diverse educators who are prepared, qualified, and who guide us, including special education teachers who have their breakdown in the context of unique priorities to support students. However, today, despite the high salience of the teaching profession, there is a worrisome perception that students do not value teaching as a career. It is exceedingly important to have an understanding of the negative attitudes and to deal with their implications in order to provide an environment conducive to support and improvement for both educators and learners (Küçüközyiğit et al.,

2017).

The colonial legacies and post-independence educational reforms in many developing countries like Somalia have contributed to the societal status of teachers. Teachers played a crucial role in designing the education systems that would serve the needs of the administration of their colonizers. Teachers were rudimentarily regarded in colonial power as almost like missionaries and certainly not as equivalent members of the civil service, and this was a change that began to come as Somalia slipped towards independence. The post-independence period, which Abdi (1998) describes as an era during which most newly independent African governments began nationalizing education and addressing the resulting challenges to elevate teachers' status, met political instability and armed conflicts. Preparation of the next cohort of teacher educators will be vital to shaping the future of education in a nation recovering from years of conflict and uncertainty, like Somalia. Due to its nomadic history, Somalia has been hindered by its underdeveloped education systems and colonial policies, resulting in incompatible educational programs. Alongside a dichotomy of British and Italian colonizers having different curriculums and languages of instruction has played a part in contributing to complexities within Somalia's education landscape. (Hassan, 2017)

Traditionally, educators held esteemed positions within Somali society, revered as gatekeepers to literacy and knowledge. However, perceptions have shifted over time, with some now viewing the teaching profession as a fallback for those unsuccessful in other career pursuits, diminishing its societal status and prestige. Understanding and addressing students' negative attitudes toward the Teaching profession is paramount to cultivating a supportive and constructive learning environment (Mose, 2017).

This paper examines the historical factors influencing students' perceptions of the teaching profession and the higher education system in Somalia. More literature is needed regarding these factors. The paper will draw on various data sources, such as academic literature, surveys, interviews, and observations.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE TEACHING SECTOR

It has also experienced a metamorphosis from its Indigenous roots to colonial intrusion and neglect, as well as a functionary stance, making teaching unattractive, and hence the lack of its universal appeal to ensure equity in education. Assié-Lumumba (2012) discusses the cultural aspects of teaching in African countries, zonal European formal learning advocacy, and the colonial education system in imperial countries. This move also marked a sharp historical change in how the community perceived teaching and led to the "de professionalization" of the career, which was supported as well by Assie Lumumba (2012), who noted that the contributions of Italian missionaries to the Somali education system during their colonial and early post-colonial periods are covered by Scalvedi (2023). This adherence to the colonial legacy in education is an educational consequence in which the study underscores the significant contribution of missionaries to the construction of educational practices that shaped perceptions of the teaching profession (Scalvedi, 2023).

This will focus on comparative analyses of educational policies by various powers and their long-run implications for current systems. Some educational practices that prevailed under the British and Italian administrations have continued to influence Somali education through a disparate and skeletal educational system. The varying curriculums and languages of instruction associated with these colonial periods have created a multi-terminology educational dialectic (Abdi, 1998). Moreover, how local communities accommodated and resisted colonial educational policies helped fashion the teaching profession. A case in point is the backlash against British colonial schooling in Somaliland, perceived as an imposition that caused a lasting distaste for teaching professions (Olden, 2008).

In Somalia, Mohamed (2023) studies the influence of curriculum and assessment policy on students' engagement and attrition risk. This work demonstrates that the existing education system needs to be more consistent and relevant in its current status, which is influenced by the stages taken from the colonial era; it impacts the students' motivation and their perspectives on education and teaching. The study shows that the Current Somali educational policies and practices must align more closely with national standards and societal needs (Mohamed, 2023). The colonial-era educational policies in Somalia have long influenced student perceptions of the teaching profession. They resulted in ad hoc, inconsistent, low-status frameworks, a generation of powerful, perpetually

unsatisfied teacher unions, and persistent structural problems plaguing the teaching corps. Comprehension of these historical influences is necessary to explicate core causes and directions for educational reforms and improve the attractiveness of the teaching profession in Somalia.

Problems in Teaching Profession Status in Society

The social position of teachers has shifted over time due to the different historical, cultural, and economic changes in different parts of the world. In the past, teachers used to be considered respected community leaders and intellectuals. Lortie (1975), on the other hand, claimed that the opportunities to escape teaching were a feature of the high level of societal esteem once enjoyed by the teaching profession, which enticed many people to enter teaching systems. Similarly, significant shifts in economic conditions, policy decisions, and societal values have changed the status and centrality of teachers, with severe consequences for the respect and recognition of teachers in different personal contexts (Lortie, D. 1976).

Furthermore, societal attitudes influence the perception of teaching as a profession and the place of teachers within a community. Instead, Hargreaves (2000) demonstrates how the social status of teaching influences the motivations and intentions of prospective entrants to the profession. In countries where teachers are treated with high esteem and are highly valued, teaching is generally viewed more positively and can encourage students to join the profession.

In addition, the effects of cultural context on how students value the career of teaching. Teaching is seen as a respected profession in many aspects of cultural honour education (Sahlberg, 2011), and respect for teaching as a valued career varies from one society to another. In cultures that value education and teachers can be excellent, you have to be picky about teachers; even good bodhisattvas are no match, and teachers are seen as critical contributors to societal development; there tends to be a more favourable view of the teaching profession.

In the Somali context, Restoring the social status of teachers is vital to winning the hearts and souls of inspiring a new generation of teachers in the Somali teaching profession. The Somali government and the international community have been actively working to address the crisis by enhancing the training of teachers, increasing teacher salaries, and improving the status of teachers. Citing (Williams et al. W., 2015), These have started to bear fruit, with many students discussing how they would like to be teachers. However, continuous effort and systemic reforms are required to turn this around merely as a short-term narrative and then only for students to reset their attitudes and perceptions of the teaching profession.

These perspectives in the literature highlight history's essential role in appreciating the current viewpoints on the teaching profession in Somalia. Recognizing the historical evolution in the social ranks of teachers, policymakers, and educators can work toward creating a more attractive and respected teaching profession for future generations.

Importance of Teacher Training Programs

Teacher training programs play an essential role in shaping the professional identity of future teachers. These programs are designed to impart academic skills and knowledge and give students a positive outlook on the teaching profession. According to Flores and Day (2006), teachers' professional identity is shaped by complex personal experiences, organizational influences, and sociocultural factors, so effective teacher education programs must consider these multiple factors and create a supportive environment that maximizes the interest of the teaching work. New teachers' professional identities are shaped and reshaped through individual professional histories, pre-service training, school culture, and leadership, which affect their teaching practices and effectiveness (Flores, M. & Day, C). 2006). Furthermore, high-quality teacher education programs significantly impact new teacher retention. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) found that comprehensive induction programs, including mentoring and ongoing professional development, lead to higher teacher achievement and better job satisfaction. This suggests that a well-structured teacher training program reduces a negative perception of the teaching profession. Induction programs for beginning teachers often improve teacher commitment, retention, and classroom instructional practices, resulting in higher student achievement (Ingersoll et al.; M., 2011). Working with children and adolescents is a crucial motive for preservice teachers, predicting

engagement in the profession, but there are differences between secondary and primary education training contexts. Multiple motives and evolving pedagogical identities influence student teachers' career choices, highlighting the importance of incorporating diverse perspectives in teacher education programs (Fokkens-Bruinsma & Canrinus, 2012).

Somalia has long history of conflict and instability has significantly impacted the education system. Despite these challenges, the teaching profession remains integral to Somali society. They understand how teacher education programs can improve students' attitudes toward the teaching profession (Moyi, 2012). Finally, incorporating reflective practices into teacher education programs has enhanced student teachers' professional development and personal efficacy. Schön (1987) argues that reflective practices enable teachers to critically examine their teaching strategies, understand their professional experiences, and adapt to the changing needs of students. Through reflective thinking, teacher education programs can help student teachers develop a deeper understanding of their role and a more substantial commitment to the profession (Schön, DA 1987). With inadequate teacher training programs in Somalia, teachers lack the knowledge and skills to teach effectively. This lack leads to ongoing conflict and a lack of funding and resources. In response to this challenge, the Somali government took steps to improve the situation by recruiting and training approximately 3,000 new teachers and another 7,000 by 2023. These efforts aim to enhance the quality of education in public schools across most federal member states and the Banadir regional administration, thereby increasing the number of qualified teachers and improving the availability of instructional materials.

METHODS OF TEACHING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Several strategies can be used to increase the teaching profession in Somalia:

1. **Increase the number of trainings:** Expanding training opportunities is essential to equip teachers with the knowledge and skills they need to teach effectively. This could be done by providing more training for prospective teachers and ongoing professional development for current teachers to improve their skills.
2. **Make the teaching profession more attractive:** Addressing the issue of minimum wages is essential to attracting more individuals into the teaching profession. The Somali government should consider working with international donors to increase teachers' salaries and provide other benefits, such as housing and travel allowances, to make teaching a more attractive career.
3. **Provide opportunities for professional development:** Continuous professional development is essential for teachers to stay current with the latest teaching methods and techniques. This can be facilitated through workshops, seminars, and online courses funded by the Somali government and international donors.
4. **Develop a comprehensive National Teacher Plan:** A consistent national teacher planning framework is needed. These policies should define the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders, provide clear criteria for teacher recruitment, training, certification, implementation, evaluation, and professional development, and align with Somali government policies and communities if there is correspondence.
5. **Partnership with educational institutions:** Universities and colleges can collaborate to develop pathways for graduates interested in teaching careers. Provision of specialized teacher education programs or accelerated strategies

CONCLUSION

This study examines the historical factors affecting students' perceptions of the teaching profession in Somalia. Colonial legacies and post-independence educational reforms profoundly impacted teachers' social status. During the colonial period, teachers were often seen as tools of the colonial administration, diminishing their status and prestige. This attitude continued after independence when political instability and armed conflict severely damaged the teaching profession. In addition, the fragmented British and Italian colonial educational

systems left behind a fragmented educational environment that continues to influence current thinking. Historically, teachers in Somalia were seen as guardians of literacy and knowledge, but this perception has changed over time. Today, teaching is often seen as an option for those unable to work in other professions, thus reducing the social status of the profession. Inadequate teacher training programs, low salaries and poor working conditions exacerbate this stereotype. Despite these challenges, there are growth opportunities. Recent efforts by the Somali government to recruit and train new teachers and provide them with professional development opportunities are a step in the right direction. Enhancing the quality of education and improving attitudes towards the teaching profession will require sustained intervention and comprehensive reform. In conclusion, understanding the historical context and its impact on current ideas is critical to effective educational reform. Addressing negative attitudes towards the teaching profession and improving the social status of teachers is essential to attract them.

Suggestions

1. **Teachers' salary reform:** To make the profession more attractive, teachers' salaries will be increased, and other benefits such as housing and travel allowances will be provided.
2. **Promote Professional Development:** Provide ongoing professional development opportunities through workshops, seminars and online courses to equip teachers with the latest teaching methods and techniques.
3. **Establish a National Teacher Program Policy:** Establish a comprehensive and consistent policy that outlines clear standards for teacher recruitment, training, certification, assignment, evaluation, and professional development. This strategy should be in line with Somali government policies and regional diversity.
4. **Improve working conditions:** Ensure teachers have the necessary resources and support to do their jobs effectively, including providing a safe and supportive work environment.
5. **Address historical legacies:** Recognize and address the long-term impacts of colonial-era education systems by aligning current educational reforms with national standards and social needs. This includes redesigning curriculum and assessment procedures to improve student relevance and acceptance.

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