Introduction

In the Federal Republic of Somalia (FRS), there are efforts to restore the country’s shattered education system after decades of civil wars that leveled most of the educational structures. For the first time, after the collapse of the central government in January of 1991, the country will send one million children and youth to school in the school year of 2013/2014 (Unicef, 2013). Even so, there are many challenges facing this new initiative as the FRS’s Ministry of Human Development and Public Services listed in a report issued on September of 2013. These challenges include socio-economic-political factors, educational program management, monitoring and evaluation processes, and more importantly curriculum organization and planning procedures, among other things. However, there are other challenges that can derail this valuable initiative, such as the alleged government corruption and any subsequent mistrust between the public and the government regarding the issue of corruption. This paper will attempt to examine curriculum organization and challenges that the Go-2-School Initiative may face in its efforts to restore the country’s education system. Also, the paper will highlight the significance of assessment and evaluation in a curriculum.

Education Disintegration

Since the collapse of the state, Somalia’s education system has been dysfunctional and in a coma. A Power vacuum developed right after the regime’s collapse and the country disintegrated into warring factions (Bakonyi, 2009). Somalia’s rule of law vanished quickly, and the subsequent chaos and confusion replaced the law and order in which public institutions and private properties were overly ransacked. Schools and education materials did not survive from the widespread looting activities; administrators, teachers, and students were either displaced or killed (Abdinoor, 2008). As a result, Somalia’s education and literacy rate, which in the midst of 1970s reached 55% (Abdi, 1998) sharply dropped after the collapse of the regime (Anagnoste, Agoston, & Draghici, 2009). Today, Somalia’s education performance is amongst the bottommost nations in the world (African Press Organization, 2011). In effect, only 42 percent of Somali children are in schools today (Unicef, 2013).

Curriculum Concept

In ordinary educational settings, a curriculum is expected to have the essential common concepts that teachers are held accountable for by their school boards and administrations. These common concepts of curriculum include scope and sequence, syllabus, content outline, textbooks, course of study, and planned experiences (Posner, 2004). These concepts are fundamentals for
establishing a valuable and meaningful curriculum that schools can follow to educate youth and children. For instance, the scope in the curriculum concept focuses on what should be taught in the class, whereas the sequence responds to the question of when different learning materials, programs, and activities should be offered (Ediger & Marlow, 1995). Besides, understanding the arrangement and the order in which these materials and other teaching programs are presented to students are equally monumental.

Another common concept for a curriculum is textbooks, which are instructional supplies used as the guide for classroom teaching. In addition, syllabus, content outline, course of study, and planned experiences are all equally important elements of the curriculum concept that Somalia’s education planners need to take into consideration. In actual fact, learning could be empty and ineffective in the absence of these concepts in any curriculum. Therefore, developing an inclusive curriculum and assessing what kinds of education materials are suitable for youth and children who grew up in a lifelong civil war is indispensable.

Due to the ongoing conflicts and the long-time absence of governance in the country, school infrastructures, teachers, and study materials (e.g., textbooks) are inadequate in Somalia (Hirda, 2013). Hence, it is vital to reorganize a curriculum that include useful learning materials and guidance in which these students can employ in the future to manage their lives and the country. Somali children may need the most logic and intelligence training courses so they are able to solve problems. In the past, Somalia’s public school curriculum might include some unrelated courses that have nothing to do with intelligences and leadership training. For instance, in the first years of the military regime, some revolutionary programs were introduced (Abdi, 1998), including a revolutionary course (Kacaan) in the public schools’ official curriculum. This course had no relevance of any kind to what students needed for intelligence preparation. We have seen the consequence that many people believed that the public properties were for the regime and not for the public, so they looted these public properties. Today, similar courses may be included in Somalia’s public school official curriculum that may result the same injury.

**Curriculum Planning**

After the curriculum concept is properly understood, educators can begin to form a plan to develop an effective national curriculum for the public schools. Curriculum, as an anticipated learning results or instructional procedures (Posner, 2004), was not important to many pre-high school Somali students as a foundation of education. Rather than program of study, the attention of many children was on teachers, whom they regarded as their entire education package, and/or the other fellow students whom they had to compete with the fundamentals of education: how to read and write. Less important to the teachers, students understood as they ascended to the higher levels of the education hierarchy that they had to follow a set of instructional plans (e.g., government funded text books) established by the curriculum department of the country’s last functioning ministry of education. Syllabus was given to students along with textbooks; schools offered basic documents about the scope and sequence in each grade level; and sports and other educational competitions between schools were introduced. At the time, the country was stable and the education sector was thriving. Today, education planning in Somalia is vulnerable and
difficult due to lack of accurate data about the number of students attending schools and overall poor educational management information system (Education Business Week, 2012). That is largely because of the absence of governance in the country for over two decades (Hirda, 2013).

Therefore, Somalia’s curriculum planners need to consider, as their starting point, the educational outcomes before they decide on what kinds of resources they need for the reorganization stage of the curriculum. The purpose of subjects will be taught in the class, the kinds of activities that the students will do besides learning, and the sequences in which these things will be done are all planning elements that need to be considered. Furthermore, materials that the students need, the duration that each subject lasts, and the characteristics of the students (i.e., knowing their background) are all important components for planning a curriculum (Posner, 2004). That could save resources and time for the Go-2-School project and could benefit thousands of deprived children in the country.

**Curriculum Organization and Standards**

Along with proper educational planning, the focus of attention should be on curriculum organization. Unifying the courses in a macro level structure to create an effective program of study and organizing the content within each course in a micro level system are equally important. Well-organized and entrenched scope and sequence of study courses will respectively prepare students for the next course of the program and for the next level of education (Posner, 2004). Furthermore, in conjunction with the curriculum concepts, planning and organization, the Go-2-School project advocates should bear in mind the significance of curriculum standards. The purpose of standards is to shape the study materials for the school. These standards are intended to discipline the students and guide them into actions of self-control to be well-organized in life after the school. Also, the objectives of school standards include almost other learning activities. For instance, school counseling programs (if they exist in Somalia) need standards that can help students achieve their educational goals (Mariani, 1998). This is an area where Somali children can be vulnerable and educators may need to concentrate. The two decades of civil wars in Somalia may have created thousands of unruly children who, as well as education rehabilitation, may need sociocultural reintegration.

Another important element for curriculum organization in Somalia is the use of technology in curriculum planning and application. Technology in curriculum organization may increase the role of students and teachers in education, giving them “instant feedback” about a subject matter (SRI, 2013). However, since Somalia is a low-income country, technology in its curriculum can be more challenging compared to curriculum planning and organization processes.

**Conclusion**

As the Somali government launched a Go-2-School initiative this year to send one million children and youth to school, curriculum concept, organization, and planning could be the major challenges that the program could face. These factors are the principles for developing an effective curriculum that schools can follow to educate students. Therefore, the program planners
may need to comprehend the importance of these elements. The Go-2-School program planners may also need to consider, as their point of departure, the educational results before they decide on what kinds of means they need for the restoration phase of the curriculum. Besides, for every project, a curriculum or otherwise, the assessment and the evaluation phases are central for its success and its survival. Therefore, after the planning and the organizing stages, followed by the implementation phase, the evaluation and the assessment steps must be employed. The assessment and the evaluation phases of a program ensure whether or not the program designers appropriately followed the program’s strategy, and whether the program’s objectives were successfully achieved after its application. For that reason, curriculum developers in Somalia should also give more attention to the areas of assessment and evaluation during and after the curriculum planning, organizing, and implementing stages.

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References


