

# HIGHER EDUCATION CROSSING BORDERLANDS: EXPERIENCES FROM SOMALILAND AND ETHIOPIA

RESEARCH ARTICLE

**Doç. Dr. Mohamed OSMAN GUUDLE**

Admas University Hargeisa  
mohamedguudle@gmail.com  
ORCID: 0000-0001-5668-4016  
R.A. Muha Mohamoud OMAR  
Admas University Hargeisa  
safamuha35@gmail.com

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**ABSTRACT:** There is a growing realization of the crucial role cross-border tertiary education may play in strengthening national capability and promoting intercultural understanding and Economic Development. Somaliland was struggling to rebuild its infrastructure after years of civil war with Somalia, it opened its first university in 1998 and has been steadily expanding its higher education system since then. While significant challenges remain, higher education is thriving as thousands of high school graduates place their hopes in the country's universities and colleges each year. Cross-border higher education (CBHE) then is becoming more and more prominent in many countries' border strategies, although this does not seem to have increased the connection between the communities of education and trade policymakers. This lack of engagement leads to numerous missed opportunities to leverage trade and economic development resources to enhance international education endeavours and vice versa. Unquestionably, there is an increasing interest in cross-border tertiary education for a variety of reasons. These variables include modifications to student mobility, program mobility, the provision of long-distance education, and the general trend of rising student enrolments (Chetro-Szivos, 2010). Cross-border tertiary education is becoming more popular, but the reasons go beyond shifting student demographics and innovative delivery strategies. Many academics contend that the intellectual development of a nation's people can influence social and economic progress within that nation. Using a mixed methods approach, this paper critically explores Cross-Border Higher Education and the local economic development, using in-depth interviews, oral data, and reports from government institutions, research centres, and educational establishments in Somaliland and Ethiopia, the experiences from Somaliland were elaborated deeply.

**Keywords:** Cross Border Education, HEIs, Somaliland, Ethiopia, Human Capital, Economic Development

## Sınır Ötesi Yükseköğretim : Etiyopya ve Somaliland Deneyimleri

**ÖZ:** Sınır ötesi yükseköğretimin ulusal kapasiteyi güçlendirmede ve kültürlerarası anlayışı ve Ekonomik Kalkınmayı teşvik etmede oynayabileceği önemli rolün giderek daha fazla farkına varılmaktadır. Somaliland, Somali ile yıllar süren iç savaştan sonra altyapısını yeniden inşa etmek için mücadele ediyordu, ilk üniversitesini 1998'de açtı ve o zamandan beri yükseköğretim sistemini istikrarlı bir şekilde genişletiyor. Önemli zorluklar devam etse de, binlerce lise mezunu her yıl ülkenin üniversitelerine ve kolejlerine umut bağladıkça yüksek öğretim geliyor. Sınır ötesi yüksek öğretim (CBHE), o zaman birçok ülkenin sınır stratejilerinde giderek daha fazla öne çıkıyor, ancak bu, eğitim toplulukları ve ticaret, politika yapıcılar arasındaki bağlantıyı artırmamış gibi görünüyor. Bu katılım eksikliği, uluslararası eğitim çabalarını geliştirmek için ticari ve ekonomik kalkınma kaynaklarından yararlanmak için çok sayıda kaçırılmış fırsata yol açar ve bunun tersi de geçerlidir. Kuşkusuz, çeşitli nedenlerle sınır ötesi yükseköğretime artan bir ilgi vardır. Bu değişkenler, öğrenci hareketliliğindeki değişiklikleri, program hareketliliğini, uzun mesafeli eğitimin sağlanmasını ve artan öğrenci kayıtlarının genel eğilimini içerir (Chetro-Szivos, 2010). Sınır ötesi yükseköğretim daha popüler hale geliyor, ancak bunun nedenleri öğrenci demografisini ve yenilikçi dağıtım stratejilerini değiştirmenin ötesine geçiyor. Pek çok akademisyen, bir ulusun halkının entelektüel gelişiminin o ulustaki sosyal ve ekonomik ilerlemeyi etkileyebileceğini iddia ediyor. Karma yöntem yaklaşımının kullanıldığı bu makalede, Somaliland ve Etiyopya'daki devlet kurumları, araştırma merkezleri ve eğitim kurumlarından gelen derinlemesine görüşmeler, sözlü veriler ve raporlar kullanılarak Sınır Ötesi Yüksek Öğretim ve yerel ekonomik kalkınma eleştirel bir şekilde ele alınıyor. Somaliland derin bir şekilde detaylandırılmıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sınır Ötesi Eğitim, Yüksek Öğretim Kurumları, Somaliland, Etiyopya, Beşeri Sermaye, Ekonomik Kalkınma

## Introduction

For more than 30 years, Somaliland has been a self-governing entity, yet no foreign country recognizes its claim to independence. Some Scholars argue that Somaliland tastes and smells like a state, and has operated as an independent one (Guudle, 2019; Hansen & Bradbury, 2007). In addition to establishing two branches of government, an executive branch, a court system, ministries, a police force, and a military force, Somaliland has also held regional and national elections for both the positions of president

and parliamentary (Bradbury et al., 2003; Guudle, 2019). Data on Somaliland, separate from Somalia, are limited due to the lack of current research, government resources, and census infrastructure (Jones, 2014, 2016). Where data is available for the broader Somalia, some limited numbers are reported.

The late 1800s marked the beginning of Somaliland's existence as a separate territory of Somalia. The region was a British protectorate until 1960, when it joined the rest of modern-day Somalia, which had previously been governed by Italy. Early on, the union experienced difficulty because of Somaliland's opposition to the concentration of authority in the country's south (CFR,2018)<sup>1</sup>.

In Somaliland, educational indicators point to 'crisis' conditions. Ethiopia and Kenya have out-of-school rates of 16% and 13%, respectively. Somaliland lags with 54% of primary-aged children not attending school. Investment in education in Somaliland lags far behind that of its neighbours, accounting for only 2.6% of national GDP and 7.2% of the government budget. Ethiopia, on the other hand, spent 4.7% of its GDP and 25% of its national government budget on education. Because of the insecurity of the Somaliland context, a significant portion of the national budget is devoted to police and security forces (Bradbury et al., 2003; Brazhalovich et al., 2016; Lochery, 2012). Even amid this dire socioeconomic situation, there has been significant growth in higher education over the last two decades (Jhazbhay, 2003; Johnson & Smaker, 2014)

There is no denying that there is an increasing interest in cross-border tertiary education. These variables include shifts in student mobility, program mobility, long-distance learning, and the general trend of rising student enrollments. Cross-border tertiary education, however, is gaining more attention for reasons other than shifting student demographics and innovative delivery approaches. Greater recognition of the crucial role cross-border tertiary education may play in strengthening intercultural understanding and creating national capacity (Chetro-Szivos, 2010; Guudle, 2022; World Bank, 2007).

Many academics contend that the intellectual development of a nation's people can influence social and economic progress within that nation. The potential of cross-border education should be carefully considered along with several other modern trends. Cross-border postsecondary education has become important and, in some cases, a requirement as a result of the globalization of economies, the transition from an industrial to a knowledge-based society, and the internationalization of education. Cross-border tertiary education is not a recent development because there has long been a tradition of knowledge and student exchange that dates back many centuries. But over the past two decades, there has been a major increase in cross-border tertiary education, largely as a result of changes in the physical and online modalities of instruction (Stella, 2006).

**Table 1.**

Demographic information for the Horn of Africa compared to Somaliland

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<sup>1</sup> See details (CFR, 2018) <https://www.cfr.org/background/somaliland-horn-africas-breakaway-state> accessed Nov 30th 2022

**Table 1. Demographic information for the Horn of Africa (UNESCO, 2011; MoEHE-Somaliland, 2012).**

	Somalia/ Somaliland	Djibouti	Kenya	Ethiopia
Total population (000)	3,500a (est. 2014)	906	41,610	84,340
Annual population growth rate (%)	1.75	1.9	2.7	2.1
Population 0–14 years (%)	44	35	42	41
Rural population (%)	62.3	23	76	83
Total fertility rate (births per woman)	6.08	3.7	4.7	4
Infant mortality rate (0/00)	100	72	48	52
Life expectancy at birth (years)	52	58	57	59
GDP per capita (PPP) US\$ (2009)	600 (2010 est.) <sup>b</sup>	2 296	1 710	1 109
GDP growth rate (%) (2009)	2.6 (2012 est.)	5	4.4	7.3
Children of primary school-age who are out of school (%)	54 (2012) <sup>a</sup>	48	16 (2009 est.)	13 (est.)
Pre-primary (GER)	n/a	4	43 (2002)	5
Primary (GER)	n/a	59	91 (2002)	106
Secondary (GER)	10 (est. 2012) <sup>a</sup>	36	41 (2002)	38
Tertiary (GER)	<5 (est. 2014) <sup>a</sup>	5	3 (2002)	8
Pupil/teacher ratio (primary)	n/a	35	47 (2009 est.)	55
<b>Public expenditure on education</b>				
as % of GDP	2.6 (est. 2012) <sup>a</sup>	8.4 (2007)	6.7 (2010)	4.7 (2010)
as % of total government expenditure	7.2 (est. 2012) <sup>a</sup>	22.8 (2007)	17.2 (2010)	25.4 (2010)

Notes. All values are for 2011 unless otherwise stated; Somaliland has little published information separate from Somalia

<sup>a</sup> Indicates Somaliland and not Somalia.

<sup>b</sup> Actual GDP per capita for Somaliland estimated at \$347 per year.

Source: (Jones, 2016)

**Table 2.**

Somaliland GDP by expenditure prices

**Table 1: GDP by expenditure, current prices, million US Dollars**

Expenditure items	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Household final consumption	1,755	1,949	2,067	2,325	2,475	2,421	2,579	3,135	3,378
Government final consumption	103	125	144	163	175	215	220	240	231
Gross fixed capital formation	156	193	238	283	328	373	438	512	426
Exports of goods and services	393	419	487	392	340	203	229	273	229
Minus: Imports of goods & services	574	671	768	864	961	1,058	1,189	1,347	1,337
GDP at purchasers' prices	1,834	2,014	2,168	2,298	2,356	2,154	2,278	2,813	2,927
GDP per capita, US Dollars	544	582	609	628	626	557	573	688	697
GDP, purchasers' prices, billion SLS	11,752	13,645	15,144	17,167	17,632	19,769	23,079	24,584	25,270
GDP per capita, Somaliland Shilling	3,448	3,940	4,254	4,690	4,686	5,111	5,804	6,014	6,014
Exchange rate	6,409	6,774	6,985	7,471	7,485	9,177	10,133	8,739	8,634

Source: (MoFD, Somaliland, 2020)

The majority of Somaliland's universities rely heavily on tuition revenue for administration and upkeep.<sup>2</sup> Government authorities, therefore, have limited ability to supervise and manage structural operations across the nation's higher education institutions. Quality standards may not always be met because some people think that some universities have an abundance of funding for students' education while they think that issues with student achievement are caused by inefficiency on the part of school administrators or a lack of motivation on the part of teachers (who are underpaid for many months) and students (Field Notes, 2022). Due to Somaliland's unrecognized economy, subpar infrastructure, severe taxation, and lack of significant economic investment, it is challenging to rebuild education and more specifically higher education. Government still relies on a limited number of local and regional actors who produce and consume less, which limits government revenue, as it has not yet attracted major players in the global economy.<sup>3</sup> The government must increase economic possibilities and give the populace the negotiating power needed for education openness and accountability at all levels (Reyna, 2003).<sup>4</sup>

Another risk is that development assistance for cross-border education will decrease for all countries as some donor nations turn cross-border education into an export industry. In low-income countries, commercial cross-border education is unlikely to develop unless there is a sizable upper middle class. The use of trade agreements like the General Agreement on Trade in Services should be taken into consideration if a nation decides to include commercial cross-border education in its capacity-building strategy. (Tazebew & Kefale, 2021; World Bank, 2007).<sup>5</sup>

**Table 3.**

Frame Work for Cross-Border Higher Education

Category	Forms and conditions of mobility		
	Development	Educational	Commercial
	Cooperation	Linkages	Trade
<b>People</b> Students Professors/scholars Researchers/ Experts/consultants		Semester/year abroad Full degrees Field/research work Internships Sabbaticals Consulting	
<b>Programmes</b> Course, programme sub-degree, degree, post graduate		Twinning Franchised Articulated/validated Joint/double award Online/distance	
<b>Providers</b> Institutions Consortia Companies		Branch campus Virtual university Merger/acquisition Independent institutions	
<b>Projects</b> Academic projects Services		Research Curriculum Technical assistance Educational services	

Source: Knight, (2005b)

There is no agreed-upon concept of quality in tertiary education, and there is no agreed-upon standard by which it may be assessed. However, the Bologna Process' influence and the requirement for coordinating learning and recognizing credentials for mobility have made quality assurance crucial as a tool

<sup>2</sup> Interview with local university management staff, July 28<sup>th</sup> 2022

<sup>3</sup> an interview with Ethiopian academic, July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022

<sup>4</sup> See also <https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20100903174336536> Accessed July 28<sup>th</sup> 2022

<sup>5</sup> for Berbera Corridor, see Tazebew & Kefale, (2021)

to provide uniform measurements and inform stakeholders. On procedures for quality assurance, there is unmistakable convergence, and there is growing consensus on the fundamentals of ethical behaviour. However, because each country's setting is distinct, each country has its own goals for quality assurance, such as safeguarding customers from subpar products or promoting excellence.

The enormous increase in student enrolments in environments with LEDCs has prompted a variety of responses from educational scholars, theorists, and planners who focus on higher education in Africa. As previously said, the SSA still trails most other regions of the world in terms of enrolments in higher education, but that doesn't imply there hasn't been remarkable progress. Focus is given to the globalization of higher education in this chapter, with a special emphasis on "excellent" dialogues and "world-class" academic publications.

These are crucial pillars for both academics who oppose changes to the fundamental principles of academic freedom and learning that have been institutionalized in the academic profession and for those who need to understand the economic, social, and political responses that are driving higher education's continued expansion. Diversification of university types and the emergence of ranking systems are other topics that are strongly related to the shift in higher education from elite to mass in different parts of the world, and this study also considers these topics.

## **Methods**

The study employs a mixed-methods approach, or what some could refer to as critical realism or "pragmatism" (Jones, 2011; Creswell, 2014). To reduce the drawbacks of studies using just one approach, the critical realism worldview in social science research allows for different modes of "knowing" while simultaneously incorporating the idea that there is an objective reality that can be examined and "known." (Jones, 2014, 2016).

The pragmatic worldview in social science, according to Creswell (2013), is "not dedicated to any one system of philosophy and reality. This is true for mixed-methods research since researchers frequently use both quantitative and qualitative presumptions in their work (p. 11).

This research paradigm produces several types of data that are appropriate for various types of research questions for a study of cross-border higher education and Somaliland perspectives, an area in which hardly any research has been done. From field data, "rational theoretical abstraction" of points of view is developed. Deep insights into the "mechanisms" or factors that influence cross-border higher education, internationalization, training, and economic development are gained from interview data and study-specific observation.

To create a more comprehensive model of organizational quality and goals, qualitative data collected through interviews and observations are crucial (Maxwell, 2005; Somekh & Lewin, 2011; Creswell, 2014; Materu, 2007; Bunting & Cloete 2012). The protocol for semi-structured interviews was applied. The qualitative analyses of the study are also influenced by the researcher's field notes made throughout months of data collection, interviews, and experience working as a professor in Somaliland since 2010 (Jones, 2014). In Somaliland and Ethiopia, official universities or government offices provided some of the documentation needed for analysis. For case studies, Yin (2009) states that "the most crucial use of documents is to corroborate and supplement evidence from other sources" (Yin, 2009)

## **Cross Border Higher Education Literature**

One thing to keep in mind is that in quality assurance circles, the words "cross-border education" and "transnational education" are used interchangeably. Since the UNESCO-OECD Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education (UNESCO, 2005), also known as the UNESCO Guidelines, use the term cross-border, and because this paper has a particular focus on those guidelines, the term "cross-border education" will also be used in the discussion that follows. (Stella, 2006; The World Bank, 2002) In the context of tertiary (or higher) education, cross-border tertiary education refers to the movement of individuals, program providers, curricula, projects, research, and services across national jurisdictional borders. A subset of educational internationalization, cross-border education can be a component of business endeavours, academic exchange programs, and projects including development cooperation (World Bank, 2007).

Although student mobility is still quite modest, it has increased significantly over the previous ten years. Through academic alliances, franchising, the establishment of branch campuses, and other arrangements, the supply of higher education abroad has also increased dramatically. In both developed and emerging economies, these shifts present significant challenges for stakeholders in education policy. (Chetro-Szivos, 2010; Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). Recently, development policies have placed a lot of focus on basic education, sometimes at the expense of tertiary education's significance for capacity development. Capacity development is the process through which individuals, groups, and society as a whole create, adapt, and sustain capacity over time, i.e., the capacity to successfully manage their affairs. The growth of one's capacity is influenced by a variety of factors, including the acquisition of high-level skills and progress monitoring. By preparing a nation's workforce in all pertinent sectors, tertiary education aids in capacity development.

Some nations could use the experience and knowledge of other nations to improve the quality of their university education systems since they lack the domestic capacity to accommodate all of their demand for tertiary education. Cross-border education can frequently assist in the rapid expansion of a tertiary education system and the growth of the nation's pool of highly trained human capital. With the help of partnerships at the institutional and system levels, it also provides academics and institutions with a benchmark for the caliber and applicability of their services and can result in organizational learning. Last but not least, it expands the variety and options available in domestic systems, which might encourage healthy competition and raise quality. (Leonard & Samantar, 2011; Ministry of National Planning and Development Republic of Somaliland, 2011; Musa et al., 2021).

The mobility of scholars and students has long been a component of national capacity-building plans. They should now think about the circumstances in which the mobility of institutions and programs could have beneficial spillover effects in their particular setting. Donor organizations had to think about how they could aid nations in gaining from international schooling.<sup>6</sup>

Cross-border tertiary education can help develop capacity, but it is not a cure-all. It can also have a negative impact on capacity development: the quality of foreign programs may be low, even if their domestic counterparts are well recognized, and rogue providers may use a foreign crest to operate more easily; foreign provision may be merely imported capacity with no impact on the local system and its development; student mobility and the acquisition of foreign qualifications may result in brain drain rather than an increase in the stock of qualified students. (Maxwell & Majid, n.d.; World Bank, 2007).

According to some academics, cross-border tertiary education may also fail to boost capacity because it is too narrow in scope to make a significant difference. Finally, unless it is financed by donor organizations, cross-border education may not always be an inexpensive alternative and hence a feasible choice in some situations due to income and cost of living differences.<sup>7</sup>

Since development aid and scholarship programs often have limited funding, commercial agreements are more likely to enhance access quickly. Additionally, commercial agreements partially contain capacity-building ideas, provide nations and people with more negotiating power, and enable more relevant supply. As with any private educational service, commercial arrangements can create inequality if they are only accessible to a wealthy elite, which eventually prevents the development of capacity (Affi, 2012; Carrier & Lochery, 2013; Guudle, 2022). Governments, students, businesses, and society are informed about tertiary education institutions and programs via systematic quality assurance processes. Such data improves accountability and openness and aids in the decision-making process for policymakers, institutional leaders, students, and businesses.

Many quality control organizations around the world have not even started to think about how to handle cross-border problem. Systems of quality assurance frequently aim to improve the quality of already-existing local tertiary institutions and programs. They only cover the public sector in some circumstances and the private domestic sector in others. Governments, however, want to guarantee stakeholders that kids are obtaining a basic level of quality regardless of the type of supply — public, private, local, or

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<sup>6</sup> An interview with Somaliland local academic, July 2022, see also, Jones (2016)

<sup>7</sup> An interview with Ethiopian Academic teaching in Somaliland Higher Education Institutions, July 28<sup>th</sup> 2022



international. Receiving nations should at the very least make an effort to create clear policies and strategies regarding international organizations that offer cross-border tertiary education, especially as they relate to concerns of access, equity, relevance to the labor market, and funding (Wariyo, 2020). An efficient regulatory framework and quality assurance system can be used to verify and monitor cross-border providers' adherence to locally set policies. While policymakers should think about how quality assurance mechanisms can help to serve a regulatory role for local cross-border provision, such reflections should not be limited to cross-border issues but rather should be made in a larger context related to important operational choices for the overall quality assurance system (Knight, 2007).

One of the forces affecting higher education significantly at the start of the twenty-first century is internationalization. Higher education's purpose, aims, functions, and delivery are being internationalized, a comprehensive process that integrates an international perspective. Academic mobility and cross-border learning are important components of internationalization. Indeed, higher education has always placed a premium on intercultural intellectual mobility. Since universities were established as institutions of higher learning and research, there has always been a global component, as evidenced by the fact that the concept of "universality" is fundamental to the idea of a university. (Knight, 2007; World Bank, 2007).

Although academic mobility has traditionally involved the worldwide movement of students and academics, it has only been more prominent in the last two decades with the migration of educational programs, higher education institutions, and new commercial suppliers. (Knight, 2007).

The quantity and nature of the cross-border programs and provider mobility are seriously understudied. The lack of knowledge regarding program mobility fosters an unfavourable atmosphere of speculation, perplexity, and frequent disinformation. This can undermine people's faith in the reliability and quality of cross-border education delivery and prevent the analysis required to support sound policy and regulatory frameworks, particularly for accreditation.<sup>8</sup>

Due to the disparate systems of data collection and the lack of a uniform set of words, obtaining this kind of data is extremely difficult. Statistics on the scope of accredited HEIs' cross-border education provision have been gathered by Australia, New Zealand, and more recently the UK. Other nations, particularly those in Europe, are gathering descriptive information on cross-border service that is largely targeted at intra-European mobility. These initiatives frequently do not involve new and alternative sources like businesses, overseas networks, or joint ventures because they are largely focused on gathering data on established university priorities.<sup>9</sup>

## Conclusion

Countries, donor countries, and organizations should take into account cross-border tertiary education as a useful capacity-building tool in their development objectives. To benefit from it, importing nations must have a proper regulatory structure. Examining cross-border issues will often prompt policymakers to re-evaluate tertiary education in general rather than just foreign offerings. A suitable framework for quality assurance will be necessary, although it might take many different forms depending on the settings of the various nations, as stated in the Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Education.

Countries that are impacted by cross-border education with their academic community should improve their technical grasp of trade agreements in light of the expansion of trade in education services and the sector's inclusion in the GATS. These agreements can be a tool in their capacity-building approach, but it's important to be aware of the risks and repercussions of making specific pledges. Countries should assess if cross-border postsecondary education should be included in their development strategy and, if so, how.

While mobility of students, instructors, knowledge, and values has always been a feature of higher education, it has recently expanded in a previously unheard-of way. Furthermore, the mobility of programs and providers through physical and virtual modes of delivery has only significantly increased during the past twenty years. This opens up a wide range of new possibilities, including greater access to higher

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<sup>8</sup> See for example (Observatory on Borderless Higher Education, 2002–2005) (see <http://www.obhe.ac.uk/> accessed July 28<sup>th</sup> 2022.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid*

education, strategic alliances between nations and regions, the creation and exchange of new knowledge, the movement of graduates and professionals, the development of institutional and human resource capacity, the generation of income, the enhancement of academic quality, and greater intercultural understanding. Some Ethiopian Technical Universities pledged to provide scholarships to deserving students through the Somaliland Ministry of Education. They also decided to work together to advance international technical collaboration.

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