

**TEACHING GOES ON:
ASSESSMENT MODELS AND THE CASE OF AN
INTERNALLY DISPLACED HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION IN THE
SOMALI REPUBLIC**

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ABSTRACT

The metric for assessing the quality of a university within a traditional Western setting is well established. Evaluation of higher education institutions within developing countries, however, is not as clear-cut. In this paper the efficacy of quality assessment measures are examined through the case study of a university in the Somali Republic, one of the world's least developed countries. The appropriateness of the measures of research, teaching, and service are examined within the context of a struggling nation. Issues that impede the mission and goals of the university are discussed. A model for the evaluation of higher education institutions is presented. The model gives consideration to external factors such as accreditation, funding requirements, and governmental agency oversight. The model proposes that quality assessment of universities should factor in the country's educational and overall environments. The goal is to make evaluation fair and relevant to the prevailing circumstances of the university and the developing country.

THE CASE OF SIMAD UNIVERSITY

The Somali Institute of Management and Administration Development (SIMAD) was established and became operational in November 1999 in Mogadishu, the capital of the Somali Republic. SIMAD became a university on January 20th, 2011. It is now an institution delivering a number of four-year degree programs. The institution receives the majority of its financial support from the Africa Muslims Agency (AMA). From a humble beginning of four small rooms in a rented house situated in the Hodan District of Mogadishu, the institute has now become one of the most important learning centers in the coun-

try. Its main campus is located along the industrial road in Mogadishu. Before being displaced, SIMAD contained four computer centers equipped with more than 60 networked PCs having all the necessary hardware and software applications, a library with the capacity of 15,000 books, a publishing unit with a copy printer and photocopy machines for the production of teaching and learning resource material, spacious 20 classroom buildings, a conference hall with a capacity of 300 people, a mosque that could accommodate about 500 people, a well that provided running water to the institute, power generators that produced the required electricity for the institute, and satellite equipment that provided a 24-hour

internet link. However, due to security concerns, the university was forced to move out of its campus, becoming an internally displaced institution operating in two buildings that formerly housed high schools. SIMAD University currently comprises the following faculties/departments: business Administration Department, Accounting Department, Information Technology Department, Foreign Languages Department, and Distance Learning Department.

This study is a critique of the prevalent Western model of assessment of higher education institutions (HEIs) as it may apply to SIMAD University. The main goal of the study is to explore the efficacy of such models when applied to HEIs in a country like the Somali Republic, a country with very little of the educational infrastructure and resources that the said Western model presupposes. The study will demonstrate that a reasonably high quality of tertiary education, which meets both the intrinsic and extrinsic objectives of an HEI, can be achieved in one of the poorest and most unstable countries in the world.

THE SOMALI REPUBLIC

The Somali Republic (Somalia) has been in a never-ending civil war since 1991 when the long serving military dictator, Siad Barre, was overthrown by a popular armed revolt. The civil war and the ensuing political instability resulted in the destruction of much of the country's infrastructure, massive displacement of the population, and the total collapse of virtually all government institutions and services. The education sector suffered the most, with primary, secondary, and tertiary schools being destroyed and many trained teachers and other professionals fleeing the country. As a result, Somalia experienced one of the severest brain drains in the African continent. This in turn resulted in the total collapse of the education sector, which was at the time almost exclusively in the public sector.

Recovery Efforts

As reported by Cassanelli and Abdikadir (2007), education in the Somali Republic started to gradually recover in the mid 1990s. The still raging civil war, however, has made a full recovery for Somalia's education system impossible. The number of children enrolled in local primary schools and the number of both primary and second-

ary schools has increased multi-fold. However, primary school enrollment rates throughout Somalia are now extremely low by international standards. Other problems include short school years, low levels of training for a large percentage of teachers, limited availability of education materials and supplies, as well as minimal support received from the fledgling Transitional Federal Government.

As the severity of the civil war subsided in the mid 1990s, the international community intervened, injecting an enormous amount of aid in many regions of the Somali Republic. Schools started re-emerging gradually with local initiatives and the assistance of the international community. The habit of going to school revived in the war-torn Somali society. As a result of this revival, communities started to contribute to the revamping of educational institutions at all levels. While there is still strong support from the international community for the education sector, mainly from the Arab world, most of the current education and training industry of Somalia is Somali-owned and Somali-run. In spite of the poor educational climate in the past, initiatives by investors, colleges, communities, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have resulted in the birth and rebirth of institutions of higher learning such as SIMAD University. Such institutions are playing a critical role in providing skilled personnel to NGOs, government departments, and local businesses and small industries. It is important to note, however, that the capacity and the quality of the current education system is far below what a dynamic and post-conflict nation like Somalia needs. Nevertheless, today's Somalia is proud to have succeeded in revitalizing its education system.

Limited Opportunities

The first secondary school graduates in the post conflict era completed their studies in the last part of the 1990s. Most of these students had limited opportunities to pursue studies in tertiary education or training. Some of the international NGOs offered limited scholarships to the students who graduated from the schools they support. For the bulk of the rest, opportunities for further studies and gainful employment in the local markets were bleak due to inadequate local market capacity and lack of employable skills among the graduates.

At the same time as the above situation was evolving, private enterprises and civil society organizations started to mushroom as a result of the improved local security conditions in the early 2000s. It became quickly apparent that the problem of qualified manpower was proving to be a serious obstacle for the local enterprises and organizations that continued to emerge. The existing schools were not producing the necessary quantity of graduates with the necessary qualifications to support a sustainable recovery of Somalia.

To further its progress, the Somali environment requires that the university systems continue to develop. The question becomes how to assure that the universities in the country are meeting their intrinsic and extrinsic goals. The quality of the universities educational services to the community must be monitored and assessed. Within such a complex, unstable, and somewhat dysfunctional environment that prevails in Somalia, assessing the quality of the university system can be problematic.

THE STUDY METHODOLOGY

The data for this study was culled from Hassan and Nur (2012), an unpublished report that used the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 9001:2008 and modern assessment criteria to evaluate the educational practices, instructional and administrative techniques, curricula, and classroom management methods of SIMAD University. The study reviewed the management systems and operations of SIMAD University with the purpose of understanding the extent of their compatibility with quality assessment considerations used in Western universities. Teaching and management related practices of SIMAD University were assessed based on analyses of gathered primary and secondary data. The assessment concluded that SIMAD University had developed and implemented a management and teaching system that can guide the university in its efforts to establish itself as a well-functioning and sustainable institution of higher education with adequately qualified faculty, staff, and professional administrators based on the principles of good governance.

As part of the assessment of the university, 10 faculty members and administrators at SIMAD were interviewed between December 28th, 2011 and January 1st, 2012. Secondary data were also

reviewed, which included strategic plans, budget information, scholarship information, academic reports, and the school's prospectus – altogether more than 20 official documents.

Assessment of Quality

This case study analysed the Hassan and Nur (2012) report in light of the existent HEI assessment theories. Traditionally, in the Western context there are three areas assessed as measures of quality: teaching, research, and service. We examined how these can be re-conceptualized when a university is located within a non-Western context. We addressed the following: Do these same goals and missions apply to universities in a developing or underdeveloped country? Do the quality indicators and measures change connotation or importance when implemented in developing countries, knowing that universities in developing countries have additional complexities when it comes to establishing quality measures?

TRADITIONAL WESTERN ASSESSMENT MODELS

University assessments have been around since the beginning of the modern university in the Middle Ages (van Vught and Westerheijden, 1994). Assessment models have changed but universities are still required to gauge the quality of their programs. Higher education institutions have intrinsic and extrinsic goals, which impinge upon the evaluation of a university's quality (van Vught and Westerheijden, 1994). Intrinsic factors are those that focus on the epistemological and ontological tasks of the university. The extrinsic dimensions of universities pertain to knowledge transfer to benefit the greater society that the university serves. To meet its intrinsic and extrinsic goals, the customary mission of an HEI is to teach, do research, and to provide service.

Assessment requirements exist to meet the needs of external groups like funding agencies, professional standards, and governmental bureaucracy requirements. Often external funding is contingent upon quality assessment, and good indicators of quality can lead to more funding. Competition from other universities can lead to the need for assessment and so can the need to attract and retain students. The goals of the external quality assurance process are improvement and account-

ability. The external quality assurance process may include audits, accreditation, examination of equity, and establishment of qualification networks (for transfer of credits). Internal quality assessment may be driven by factors such as allocation of resources, teaching load and student enrollment. Intra-institutional quality may be measured through peer evaluations and self-evaluations.

Evaluation Models

The modern practice of higher education assessment is long standing and well established (van Vught and Westerheijden, 1994; Nusche, 2008; Alderman, 2010; Harvey and Williams, 2010). In Europe and in the United States, the processes of assessment of quality are consistent and uniform because HEIs quality assessments are based upon measurement of extrinsic and intrinsic indicators. However, multiple forms of evaluation of HEIs have been put into practice. Different stakeholders, such as the government, the professional organizations, faculty, and sponsors, have different assessment objectives. External evaluations of quality can be set by institutionalized higher education accreditation bodies, which are controlled by the HEIs. Professional groups may set standards, which is termed specialized accreditation. In some cases, universities or university program standards are under the control of a government or governmental organization.

Although systematic evaluation of universities is commonplace, there is not a standard approach to evaluations (Van Kemenade, Pupius, and Hardjono, 2008; Palomares-Montero and García-Aracil, 2011; Williams, 2010). There is a movement, however, toward creating a standardized evaluation tool for universities. As a part of this movement, using the Delphi method to survey leading university academics and managers, Palomares-Montero and García-Aracil (2011) established 12 important indicators that experts felt should be included in all assessments of teaching, research and service. Indicators for research include the counting of publications, citations, licenses granted, research contracts, patents and money generated by university projects. Teaching indicators include faculty to student ratio, the number of graduate students, and the number of students working in research and development. Interestingly, the experts who Palomares-Montero and García-Aracil (2011) surveyed did

not place a high value on service as an important indicator of quality.

CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCE

Abukari and Comer (2010) examined the higher education system in Ghana, a developing nation, and illustrated that context should influence how one views quality. Therefore, national and local contexts should be of crucial importance when establishing procedures to determine quality. According to the authors, the definition of quality and how to determine the stakeholders and judges of quality may be different for a developing nation. We argue that the measures and assessment standards developed by Palomares-Montero and García-Aracil are not appropriate for all HEIs. Considerations should be made for the context within which each specific HEI is operating.

CONSIDERING CONTEXT IN ASSESSMENT

It is tempting to examine all universities, including those located in African countries, with the same HEI quality lens. HEIs in many African countries, such as Nigeria, Botswana, Kenya and Ghana, have been examined using common Western measures (Harvey and Williams, 2010; Johnson and Hirt, 2011; Sterian, 1994) and extensive attention has been paid to the South African HEI system (de Jager and Gbadamosi, 2010; Jita, 2006). Missing is the examination of the HEIs in extremely underdeveloped countries in Africa such as Somalia. The establishment of unified African evaluation standards is difficult, if not impossible (Okeke, 2011; Teferra and Altbach, 2004; Strydom and Strydom, 2004). Vast disparities exist between countries in Africa in terms of development, educational achievement, and political stability. Each country has its own needs and problems. It would be extremely complicated, and possibly unfair, to include developing countries like Somalia in a standardized measure of quality in higher education. Modeling the standardized accreditation procedure after the Bologna Process, which is the European degree standards, is a goal for many countries in Africa (Okeke, 2011). However, any process of quality assessment must give consideration to the contextual needs of the local circumstances and situations. The requirement to examine context is particularly true in developing and underdeveloped countries that do not have the infrastruc-

ture or resources which are taken for granted in developed countries. Current assessment models do not account for all of the contextual variables that must be considered within a developing country.

The question then becomes, how does one assess quality within different contexts? Specific to this paper is the issue of evaluating a university in a country that does not have the resources and infrastructure that universities in developed nations have. Considering the context of a less developed country, appropriate quality indicator measures may be more difficult to establish (Abukari and Comer, 2010). This is because resources and situations differ. For example, in a developing country the materials and books may be difficult to procure for instruction. Regular research programs may be difficult to establish and spaces for teaching and research may be damaged or not adequate. In the following sections the common aspects of assessment are examined and tied to the case of Somalia's SIMAD University.

ASSESSING SIMAD UNIVERSITY

One basic indicator of quality is access to higher education. Many issues enter into access like the number of students in a university, the scholarship opportunities for students and equal access for females. Africa has a low rate of tertiary education (Teferra and Altbach, 2004; Lihamba, Mwaipopo, and Shule, 2006). In a developing nation such as Somalia, examining students' access to the university is important. Relative to other countries in the world, Somalia ranks among the lowest in terms of development. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) established the Human Development Index (HDI), which is reported annually and is a ranking of a country's standard of living. The HDI statistic is calculated based upon three variables: life expectancy, education achievements of the population, and gross national income. A few United Nations countries, including Somalia, have no rating because data was not available. The last overall HDI rating for Somalia was published in 1996 from 1993 data (United Nations Development Programme, 2011). Somalia was rated in the lowest category. A few statistics on education were listed in the 2011 report. In Somalia 32.6% of children attend primary school and 7.7% attend secondary school. The tertiary school statistics are unknown, but given the likelihood of attrition and the low secondary education numbers, this statis-

tic is expected to be extremely low. Therefore, the quality indicators based on student enrollment (Palomares-Montero & García-Aracil, 2011) would be low in this under-developed nation.

Under these circumstances and with Somalia moving towards a semblance of stability, the education and training sector, the local/international NGOs, and community based organizations started new initiatives to provide solutions to the above shortages. As a result of these initiatives higher learning institutions such as universities, colleges and institutes were founded one after another in Mogadishu and other regions in the Somali Republic.

BOYER'S MODEL AND ASSESSMENT

Most HEIs recognize three aspects of professional practice of college faculty: teaching, research, and service - as if all three were distinct entities within the life of faculty. Boyer's model, which binds all the three areas, may shed a light on the relevant issues related to evaluation. Boyer distinguishes between the three components, but offers a new arrangement for them. In the Boyer model, there are four categories of professional practice that faculty undertake: (1) Scholarship of Discovery; (2) Scholarship of Integration, (3) Scholarship of Application, and (4) Scholarship of Teaching. Although Boyer explains them separately, the interconnectedness between the four facets of scholarship reveals a professoriate that values the construct of linking all four facets together.

The assessment areas suggested by Boyer's model fit the basic functions of an HEI, even one which is functioning within a difficult context. The integrative nature of this model makes it useful for evaluating SIMAD University. Additionally, the interconnectedness of the four aspects of higher education align the goal of helping the university change the community while increasing the university's quality.

Scholarship of Discovery

The scholarship of discovery is similar to traditional scholarship referenced in empirical research, which can be either qualitative or quantitative. However, Boyer asserted that the outcome of the scholarship of discovery is not intended to only increase the knowledge of the faculty but to also inform the practice of the faculty. Out of necessity, research is a low priority at SIMAD

University. Nearly all faculty function as administrators and little time is dedicated to research. Accessing research materials, including scholarly materials, can be a challenge at the university.

Scholarship of Integration

The scholarship of integration is a “form of research that attempts to interpret ideas, synthesize diverse fields and shed new light on existing theories” (Gordon, 2007, p. 196). This primarily promotes the integration of thought across disciplines, where faculty members from different disciplines could collaborate within a research endeavor or within a teaching exercise. SIMAD University works to create integration through the one publication that produces quarterly, *Somali Business Review*. Although the size and scope of the publication is limited, it assimilates information for a broad audience. The university faculty contributes to the *Review*. Because the *Review* is published in English, it is not clear how accessible it is to people outside the university.

Scholarship of Application

Boyer incorporated the Scholarship of Application into his model due to his belief that “faculty scholarship was regarded by all too many as fundamentally disconnected from the larger purposes...” (Rice, 2002, p. 1). This relates to the common distinction in faculty roles of teaching, research, and service. However, this particular example of service would not be simply serving on committees but rather using the practice of scholarship to find solutions to problems and enhance the capacity of the community. This is the ultimate external goal of the university, expanding beyond the immediate bounds of the university. This aspect of the model is the most difficult to accomplish within a newly stable society and newly operational university. However, this has been one of SIMAD University’s main goals, and it has accomplished much in that regard. It employs the best and the brightest among its graduates, accounting for about 80% of its faculty and administrators. Many of its graduates find jobs with local businesses as computer programmers, accountants, and managers. Others work for the Transitional Federal Government as administrators, inspectors, and supervisors.

Scholarship of Teaching

According to Boyer scholarship of teaching and scholarly teaching should be viewed as the same. The act of excellent teaching is scholarship in itself. Teaching involves examining instruction and student learning. The faculty at SIMAD focus their energy in this area. Teaching is accorded the highest priority. However, the means of quality assessment of teaching are limited. Student and peer evaluations have only recently been introduced, which is a step in the right direction.

Although not all aspects were met by SIMAD University, Boyer’s model offers additional insights into the next steps that need to be taken. As mentioned earlier, although Boyer explained each entity separately, he viewed the four categories as interconnected. He also viewed them as possibly sequential, which would be helpful in the implementation phase. Since the scholarship of discovery is the most familiar of the four categories, faculty could begin with this process of scholarship. However, at SIMAD currently, faculty do not have the resources for traditional research that would be categorized under scholarship of discovery. With an understanding of the complex issues facing SIMAD and Somalia, faculty may find working on complex issues within the community through the scholarship of application a natural endeavor. Boyer (1991) explained that all the knowledge and understandings gained from the three categories of scholarship: discovery, integration, and application, can be utilized in developing curriculum and instruction to enhance the scholarship of teaching and thus student learning. Although Boyer understood that change was difficult, he promoted this new model of the professoriate because he recognized that “teaching is crucial, that integrative studies are increasingly consequential, and that in addition to research, the work of the academy must relate to the world beyond the campus” (p. 75).

HIGHER GOALS OF EDUCATION

An additional part of a developing country’s higher education purpose is for its HEIs to provide service to the university and to the community. Teaching and research are important but they must have a higher purpose, one that is tied to improving the nation. Service is intended to specifically attack the problems of a country with high needs in growth and advancement

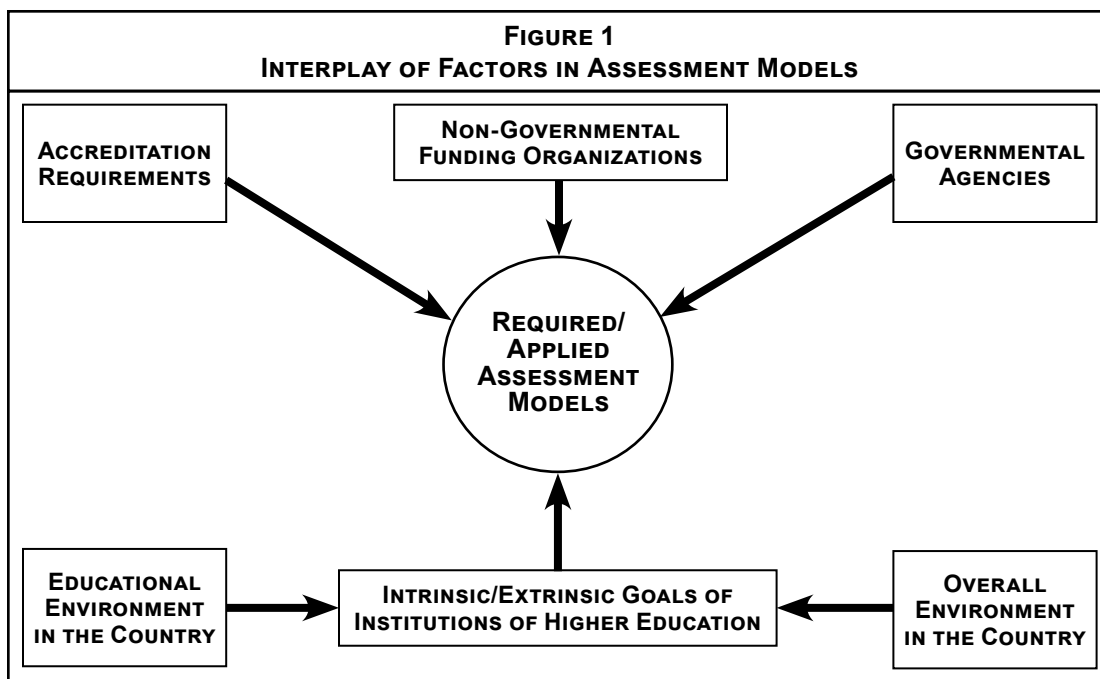
(Abukari, 2010). In a developing country, quality should be defined based upon the HEIs ability to meet needs through teaching, researching, and service. One goal of a university, according to Abukari and Comer (2010), should be to reduce poverty and to develop human potential. The outcome is to increase equity and to create mutually beneficial, reciprocal relationships among members of society. The needs of the community as determined by local, national and international contexts are to be considered.

Quality Dilemma

Abukari and Comer (2010) state that content, process, and outcome are each important for determining quality given the goals of a university in a developing country. The process of evaluating an HEI quality falls to academics, students, and professional organizations. Funding agencies as well as the international community, other key evaluators of quality, may be the stakeholders who may be influenced more by a *Western perspective* than a *developing nation perspective*. The authors state, “The choice between local and international quality imperatives is another quality dilemma that the University faces; should it adhere to the local quality indicators or adapt to the international standards?” (p. 201).

The quality assurance system within universities in developing countries concerns matters such as

instruction quality, equity and access (Bazargan, 2007). Defining what quality is within a developing country can be tricky (Idrus, 2003; Van Kemenade, Pupius and Hardjono, 2008; Havey and Williams, 2010), because it requires that stakeholders establish quality. However, every university has a number of stakeholders that can place conflicting demands on the university. This may be especially true in a developing, unstable country. Bazargan (2004) describes a process for establishing a quality assessment system and the important elements of that system in a developing country. The process requires that consideration be given to the needs of the country to determine what quality is. Research is done to determine needs. An assessment system is piloted and stakeholders give feedback. Members of the HEIs learn the evaluation system and are encouraged to take ownership. This process allows for the beginning of internal and external evaluation. An example is the case chronicled by Bazargan (2007), in which the Iranian government launched an evaluation system for its universities. Internal factors were first standardized when the government created a self-assessment system. Reports on quality assessment were required from departments so that external evaluation could be conducted. External evaluation was through peer-review.



SIMAD UNIVERSITY ASSESSMENT MODEL

SIMAD University started its quality control evaluation with self-assessment using modern models. It was soon realized that these models had to be extensively modified if they were to be of any value due to the many factors listed above. The diagram in Figure 1 summarizes the assessment features that our study of SIMAD University suggests. The required assessment features (middle circle) are driven by demands placed on the HEI from accreditation entities, non-governmental funding organizations, and governmental agencies. The applied features (the other half of the middle circle) on the other hand get their impetuses from the overall environment of the country (political, legal, and socio-economic) and the educational environment moderated by the intrinsic and extrinsic goals of the HEI. Once a baseline was established through self-evaluation, SIMAD used it to advocate for more resources from its external funders.

Accreditation Issues

In the case of SIMAD University, the requirements placed on it from accreditation and funding needs are mediated through trust based relationships. The organizations upon which the university relies are connected to it through shared values, membership in the religious organizations, and cultural affinities. SIMAD University belongs to African and Asian HEI associations that accept its degrees. Thus, SIMAD sends some of its brightest graduates to graduate programs in Malaysian, Pakistani, Sudanese, Kenyan, and Ugandan universities. Sending students to universities in the above listed countries has the added advantage of drastically decreasing the possibilities for further brain drain. Many Somali students who obtain scholarships to Western countries end up staying there after graduation. In contrast, the overwhelming majority of Somali students who graduate from universities in the above countries come back to Somalia. SIMAD provides scholarships to those students with the contractual understanding that they would work for SIMAD for four years following their successful completion of the respective graduate program. This has been one of the most successful programs at SIMAD University.

Funding Issues

It has already been mentioned that most of the educational funding comes from non-governmental Arab sources. Strong cultural, political, and religious affinity between Somalia and the Arab world allows the mutual relationship to be fundamentally trust based. This is one major reason that Western non-governmental funding agencies are largely ineffective within this region. Because of the country's geographic proximity to the Middle East (Somalia is located immediately south of the Arabian Peninsula, separated only by the Gulf of Aden), Somalis have had deep historical, cultural, and religious ties to the Arab world. The Somali Republic is a member of the Arab League, the pan-Arab organization that unites the 22 countries of the Arab world.

Teaching Issues

Perhaps because of the funding dependence on Arab non-governmental organizations, Arabic is the medium of instruction in most primary and secondary schools. (Some tertiary education is also provided in Arabic.) Despite the above mentioned close relations the Somali people have with the Arab world, Arabic is not a native tongue spoken in Somalia. Somali is a member of the Afro-Asiatic family of languages which comprise all Semitic and Hemitic languages. Arabic as the medium of instruction for primary and secondary education in Somalia poses at least two problems. First, it is not a native language, so its use is thus prone to all the difficulties inherent in learning non-native languages. The overwhelming majority of the teachers who teach Arabic in the schools are Somalis who do not have the necessary proficiency in the language. Thus, although Arabic is the official medium of instruction and the instructional and assessment materials are in Arabic, the teachers lecture in Somali. The second problem is that most degree programs offered at the tertiary levels are in English. The same linguistic inconsistencies exist here too: the professors lecture in Somali although the instructional media and assessment are in English.

Government Issues

One of the ironies of the above educational system is that close to 70% of the students SIMAD University admits each year are graduates of

Arabic language secondary schools. Currently all degree programs at SIMAD University are offered in English. This is where the absence of an overall educational policy championed by the government is sorely felt. Educational institutions at all levels self-regulate. The Transitional Federal Government is too weak and too disorganized to do anything other than register HEIs and pass on the occasional scholarships provided by friendly countries in the Middle East and the West.

General aspects of the overall environment in Somalia and the education environment have already been alluded to in this study. The inherent forces of those environments drive the intrinsic and extrinsic goals of SIMAD University, which so far has been very successful in charting a route through these often conflicting forces. Thus out of Boyer's model, SIMAD University focused on welding teaching and service together by turning all full time faculty into administrators. Research is transformed into a practical application of concepts taught at SIMAD in the day-to-day running of the university.

CONCLUSION

The case of SIMAD University illustrates the variables to be considered when evaluating HEI characteristics within complex, unstable and possibly dangerous environments. The application of this evaluation model to universities in developing countries will allow for a more fair perspective of quality. This, in turn, allows for an expansion of internal assessment for improvement in areas like teaching and research. Scholarship, as Boyer suggests, can be encouraged to expand into and improve the external environment outside the walls of the university. Using the model to evaluate the universities' accomplishments and challenges can improve the likelihood of achieving external goals like accreditation and attracting further funding.

Future research on assessing HEIs in developing countries should expand the assessment of this model to other universities in other contexts. Because this project was a case study, it has limited generalizability. The country targeted for this study was among the most dangerous, least stable, and the least developed. Other underdeveloped countries may have different circumstances which must be considered in an evaluation of its HEIs.

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