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Reproducing the state? Organising primary education between state and non-state actors in Somaliland

Abstract

The Somali education sector had almost collapsed by the time Somalia's government imploded in 1991. However, an education sector re-emerged in the self-declared independent Republic of Somaliland. Despite limited resources and lacking international recognition as a state, education continues to be provided. This paper sets out to analyse the role played by the state in this process. Although practices of organising primary education provision are largely located outside the state framework, the state continues to be productive for non-state actors in their continuous attempts to deliver education. Despite its distant role, the state is not completely powerless within the organisation of the sector. The paper describes first how the state accumulated sufficient power to be in charge of the education sector. This is followed by three cases unpacking how the state and its power is re-produced between state and non-state actors.

Keywords: Somaliland; education provision; symbolic power; statehood; state/non-state relations..

Introduction

‘Why does the state stay when it keeps failing?’
(University student, Hargeisa, 19.03.2014)¹

When the central government in Mogadishu collapsed in 1991, the provision of education had practically already disappeared in most of Somalia. More than 90 percent of schools were completely destroyed by war in the late 1980s,² and the wider education sector had virtually collapsed.³ This did not mean that public services were no longer provided nor that governance processes were absent. The literature on Somalia has widely shown how governance continues to be delivered from actors other than the government,⁴ and that different types of political orders have been established across the Somali territories.⁵ Importantly, ongoing negotiations between ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ forms of authorities in the Northern region of the collapsed Somali Republic shaped the self-declared Republic of Somaliland, which however remains unrecognised by the international community.⁶ While the creation of a political order and institutionalisation of (hard) power in Somaliland have been documented in detail, less is known about how public services are organised, particularly in the education sector.

What does the unrecognised status of Somaliland and the almost complete destruction of an education sector mean for the provision of education services in contemporary Somaliland? On the one hand, the unrecognised status of Somaliland’s sovereignty means that the state administration cannot receive bilateral aid effecting the national budget, constraining governmental attempts at state building and public service delivery.⁷ Moreover, most of the *de facto* state’s limited national budget is spend on security,⁸ and little is left for delivery of other public services including education. In 2017 the government budget was US\$259 million of which approximately 7% was allocated to education.⁹ On the other hand indicators illustrate that education continues to be delivered. For example, the number of primary schools has grown

steadily, from virtually zero in 1990, to 294 in 2001, to 1083 in 2015.¹⁰ In other words, notwithstanding a small budget and a contested status, education services continue to be provided in Somaliland.

This paper sets out to explore how education services continue to be organised, and more importantly, it aims to analyse the role of the state in doing so: how is the state reproduced (or not) between state and non-state actors in Somaliland's education sector? Concretely, we show how the state framework and policies are productive for non-state actors in their continuous attempt of organising primary education delivery.

The article draws on eight months of qualitative field research carried out mainly in Hargeisa, the capital of Somaliland, between late 2016 and early 2017, and late 2017, as well as three weeks of preliminary fieldwork in Hargeisa in mid-2016. During the eight months of fieldwork, two short trips to a village approximately 70 kilometres south of Hargeisa were also conducted for this research.¹¹ Field research included 150 qualitative semi-structured interviews with donor representatives, teachers, government officials, school inspectors, head teachers, members of community education committee, and businessmen. Moreover, participant observation and informal discussions with teachers, parents, and state officials inside and outside schools were recorded in field notes. Lastly, government staff and donor representatives kindly provided documents supplementing the first-hand data.

The article is divided into four main parts. The first part, following this introduction, sketches out the view of non-state production of 'the state' and the struggle for symbolic power as a prerequisite in trajectories of state formation. The second part provides a short historical overview that describes how the state administration became understood as the main authority in charge of the education sector. The historical section is followed by three examples that show how 'the state' is productive in the organisation of education delivery between state and non-state actors. Finally, a few concluding remarks will be made.

Non-state reproduction of the state and the state's symbolic power

Migdal and Schlichte provide a helpful distinction between 'practices of the state' and the 'idea of the state' to understand how the state administration can remain the main authority in a sector in which non-state actors are the main drivers of education delivery.¹² 'Practices of the state' involves 'the diverse, multiple actions of state actors as well as the myriad responses and interactions with state officials of non-state actors.'¹³ What is commonly understood as key state practices such as delivering security or primary education, are not nested neatly in government institutions but are also produced by a range of actors. These 'practices of the state' should be separated from the 'idea of the state', which Migdal and Schlichte view as the globalised image of the state as a 'coherent, controlling organization in a territory, which is a representation of the people bounded by that territory.'¹⁴ This means that although practices such as financing and regulating education services might be located beyond the state administration, the 'idea of the state' as a unity can survive and evolve, though also can be unmade. In other words, 'the state' is a construct that is produced and unmade by different actors over time. To become 'real' it needs to constantly be enacted and (re)produced. This is done in a variety of ways and through a multitude of platforms. On this latter point, the platforms in various actors enact and (re)produce the state, Mitchell argues how the state 'is presented and reproduced in visible everyday forms, such as language of legal practices, the architecture of public buildings, the wearing of military uniforms, or the marking out and policing of frontiers.'¹⁵

Important is thus not only that the state administration is involved in the reproduction of the state as an idea. Rather a variety of non-state actors are also involved in these processes. As Lund puts it: 'public authority becomes the amalgamated result of exercise of power by a variety of local institutions and the imposition of external actors, conjugated with the *idea* of

the state.’¹⁶ The importance of non-state actors in practices of delivering public services is not a new observation. In the last ten years, a flurry of concepts and insights have been introduced to refer to these insights. Empirical grounded concepts such as ‘hybrid political order’¹⁷ ‘real governance’¹⁸ and ‘negotiated statehood’¹⁹ all refer to non-state engagement in the production of statehood. Put differently, the ‘idea of the state’ is the outcome of ongoing actions by multiple competing and co-operating actors, of which the state administration is only one.²⁰ For example, Hagmann and Peclard’s ‘negotiated statehood’ argues that ‘the state’ – or statehood – is constantly negotiated between state and non-state actors in different arenas.²¹ The negotiated nature of ‘the state’ means that (re)productions are often, though not always, conflictual, and always the outcome of interactions. An important consequence of this situation is that both state and non-state actors possess various degrees of power. Particularly interesting for this paper is Bourdieu’s notion of symbolic power, which he defines as:

a power of constituting the given through utterances, of making people see and believe, of conforming or transforming the vision of the world and, thereby, action on the world and thus the world itself, an almost magical power which enables one to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force.²²

Power, from this perspective, is not an exercise of physical and coercive force, but is more subtle, though equally effective. In other words, while the state administration does not necessarily have the financial or administrative power to organise the education sector, it remains able to co-shape the sector. Symbolic power gives the state ‘the power to determine the situation in which the interactions that comprise the negotiated order take place.’²³ This means that the state administration, despite not being very present, has a special ‘almost magical power’ to shape the delivery of public services.²⁴

Symbolic power has a temporal dimension. The symbolic power of the state does not emerge abruptly, but is accumulated over time. Loveman makes a distinction between two

phases. The first is the ‘primitive accumulation of symbolic power’, referring to the struggles between different actors which have led to the establishment of political order (i.e. a state). As she makes clear: ‘[w]ith the accumulation of symbolic power, the institutional reality of the state becomes naturalised.’²⁵ The second phase is the ‘routine exercise of symbolic power,’ which is the ‘specific mechanisms and techniques the state employs to get the job done’ and these ‘begins when activities that were once controversial [...] are no longer challenged.’²⁶ For example, routine exercise of symbolic power could be seen in collecting tax or issuing licenses for schools.

The use of routine exercise of symbolic power does not mean that methods and practices in the education domain are no longer contested. The main issue is that the ‘idea’ of the state as the overall authority in the education sector has stabilised, or ‘naturalised’ as Loveman puts it.²⁷ Weber calls this phenomenon the transformation from coercion or power into domination authority based on obedience and recognition rather than physical force.²⁸ In other words, non-state actors adhere to the state framework, not because they are forced to, but because they accept the state’s authority. This has been widely looked at in terms of legitimacy: ‘state-building is seen as a process of accumulating “basic legitimacies” by the state’ in which the state legitimises its authority.²⁹ Migdal and Schlichte’s ‘state practices’ are part of this dynamic: a variety of actors, and more particularly non-state actors, adhere to the state, and reproduce the state framework, policies, symbols, and so on.³⁰

Lastly, given the way in which the paper analyses the interaction between state and non-state actors, it is worth examining how boundaries between ‘state’ and ‘non-state’ are understood and constructed – something which Gupta, by relying on Nandy,³¹ calls the ‘imperialism of categories.’³² Gupta argues that public discourses and everyday practices of ordinary people ‘meshes the imagined translocal institution with its localized blurred boundaries embodiments’.³³ In other words, while the state is constructed as an imagined

coherent entity through public discourse, everyday practices of lower level public servants blur distinctions between state and non-state. Mitchell is particularly useful in further unpacking this boundary.³⁴ He argues that ‘the state’ is a line drawn internally ‘within the network of institutional mechanisms through which a certain social and political order is maintained.’³⁵ For example, corporate banking groups, government treasuries, export-import banks, international monetary organisations and so on are part of ‘interlocking networks of financial power and regulation.’³⁶ While a clear-cut state-society division is difficult to make in this context, banks present themselves as private institutions, clearly different from the state. In doing so, a particular order is maintained – in this case financial and economic, but this also holds for social and political boundaries. The state’s boundary therefore ‘never marks a real exterior’,³⁷ but instead is actively produced and maintained. This boundary, as Mitchell argues ‘does not mark the limit of the processes of regulation. It is itself a product of those processes.’³⁸ In these circumstances, the state itself should be seen as an ‘effect’, more concretely of ‘mundane processes of spatial organization, temporal arrangement, functional specification, supervision and surveillance, and representation.’³⁹

In this paper, we engage with, and build further on the above insights. First, we argue how the engagement of non-state actors with the ‘idea’ of the state not only has a passive side: non-state actors also engage actively in state practices and the reproduction of the state. Second, in doing so, we show how the boundary between state and non-state is being actively reproduced by a range of actors, and how the state itself is an effect of these processes, particularly the ways in which these actors coalesce to deliver education services. The remainder of this article looks at how these processes play out in Somaliland.

From tin milk cans to ‘free education’: primitive accumulation of symbolic power in the education sector

In 1988 two of the main cities in today’s Somaliland, Burao and Hargeisa, were bombarded by the Somali National Army led by the then President Mohamed Siad Barre. Grievances against the Barre regime had grown in the 1980s due to increasing marginalisation of political opponents and limited economic development in many parts of the country. This in turn led to the mobilisation of different militant movements resisting the regime.⁴⁰ The aim of the 1988 bombardments was to force out the Somali National Movement (SNM) operating in present day Somaliland, and which had attacked the government army in the two cities. The civil war had devastating consequences: at least 50,000 people were killed in Northern Somalia between 1988 and 1990 and nearly half a million sought refuge in neighbouring Ethiopia.⁴¹ When Siad Barre fled Mogadishu in January 1991 and the central government officially collapsed, the main cities had already been destroyed completely. The same can be said about the education sector.

Most of the few schools that still had roofs were either occupied by displaced families or had been looted.⁴² Re-establishing schools was, however, not the most urgent task for the newly established administration in the self-declared Republic of Somaliland, formerly known as the northern part of Somalia. The proclamation of an independent Somaliland came after several peace negotiations by a group of elders, politicians, and representatives of the SNM. During the conference in Burao in 1991, which resulted in the re-claiming of independence, Abdirahman Aw Ali, a leading member of the SNM, was appointed as the first official minister of education.⁴³ Yet, in Aw Ali’s own words: ‘I was minister by name only, there was not much to be minister of [...] it was difficult times.’⁴⁴ Most urgent were processes of negotiating peace between different clan elders and representatives, providing security and demobilising militias. As the former minister explains: ‘when you talk about health, education and these thing, you

need law and order first. It was a prerogative of the government to establish law and order, demobilise the militias and disarm the people. First reconcile, then disarm, then demobilise, then educate.⁴⁵

A few members of the SNM had already been organising basic education in refugee camps in Ethiopia. One of these was Hussein Elmi Warsame, who had acted as ‘head of education’ in a refugee camp near Hartishek in Ethiopia. When Somaliland announced independence, Hussein Elmi became the equivalent of a Director General of Education. He remembers how a ministry took shape during the early days of independence:

We made an announcement to all teachers, educationists and others who were related to education that we wanted to open schools. We found 50 people who could help, like teachers and administrators [...] Then we held a workshop for those people for seven consecutive days, but we didn’t have much assistance, at that time: “it was help yourself”,⁴⁶ but some food was brought to us from Djibouti. We then started the education department.⁴⁷

The workshop resulted in a plan to (re)open ten schools in Hargeisa, which had been used as schools in the Somalia era. Likewise, the newly formed education ministry moved into the building that had formerly been used as Regional Education Office during the Somali administration. In other words, an education sector slowly took shape as the contours of new Somaliland state emerged.

The new administration had limited resources, however. As a result, most schools were organised by community members. In the void of government-led education provision, local community members, parents, and teachers who had returned from refugee camps led the re-opening of public schools with financial support from the diaspora.⁴⁸ A head teacher in Hargeisa who has worked in the same school since it re-opened in 1991 explains that it was the community, meaning ‘parents, elders, and other peoples in the neighbourhood’, who re-opened

the school.⁴⁹ He continues:

At that time students sat on tin milk cans. The community was mobilising the children. They went from door to door asking them to come to school. [...] The school was completely collapsed: no windows and no roof. The parents collected some money to repair it, and found wood to blind the windows. There were no NGOs at that time and the government had no funding.⁵⁰

Education and schools therefore had to be built from scratch by the communities voluntarily. A later Director General explained that: ‘this sense of voluntarism was based on the idea that the government would take over one day. In the end: “we will get [a]salary”, they thought.’⁵¹ This eventually also happened. As the administration began collecting tax in 1993 after the inauguration of the first President of Somaliland, Mohamed Haji Ibrahim Egal, some teachers and other educational staff started receiving salaries. The state administration did not, however, pay all school staff. Far from it. Practices of collecting fees therefore continued. Remittances from the diaspora continued playing an important role in supporting schools in this regard.

Although the state administration did not provide significant resources for reconstructing school buildings or for teachers’ salaries, they did play an important role in facilitating contacts with NGOs and external donors. A former SNM fighter who has been working in the education sector since the early years of Somaliland recalls how officials of the new state called for international support:

The first thing we did was to write an education appeal letter and circulated it through a fax. At that time, we only had one fax in Hargeisa. You could go there and send letters outside. We sat there every day and we sent the letter to governments, NGOs, everyone we could think of to support us. Save the Children UK was the first and only to respond, they sent a mission to see how it was here. They bought sorghum for teachers, so they had something

to eat.⁵²

Slowly the ministry managed to pay more and more teachers and also build more schools. This was only possible with the help and support from international organisations and especially the Norwegian Refugee Council, UNICEF,⁵³ and Save the Children International.

International agencies did not only support by building schools and paying teachers, but also assisted in developing the first Somaliland curriculum in 1998. From Nairobi, UNICEF and UNESCO held workshops to create a new curriculum for all of Somalia including Somaliland. However, the administration in Somaliland rejected the proposal: as Somaliland had claimed independence, and as Somaliland had already created a syllabus outline three years earlier in 1995, they did not want to use textbooks from Somalia. Abdullahi Yashin, who is the current director of the curriculum department and who attended the workshops in Nairobi, explains: ‘If we couldn’t get our own [curriculum] we would leave the workshop [...] [T]o build a nation state, we needed our own curriculum with its own history and geography to show that we are different from Somalia.’⁵⁴ The Somaliland curriculum became a reality with seven core subjects (Somali, English, Arabic, Islamic Studies, Social Science, Mathematics and Science) and two non-core subjects (art and geography and physical training), but it was not until 2001 that the textbooks were printed in Nairobi, before being shipped to Berbera, then distributed throughout Somaliland. The curriculum was first revised in 2009 and, as we shall see in the second case, revised again in 2016.

[table 1 near here]

Alongside government attempts at re-making a public education sector, a number of privately-run Koranic schools either survived the state collapse or re-emerged soon after.⁵⁵ This to some extent helps explain why schooling never completely disappeared in the early 1990s, as shown in table 1. The Koranic schools took the shape of either organised madrasas connected

to a mosque, or non-formal Koranic schools in which the Koran and some other subjects are taught in private houses. Some of the non-formal type of Koranic schools have today developed into formal private primary schools. Formal, in this context, means obtaining the necessary license from the authorities in Somaliland by paying a registration fee of US\$150 and by following the Somaliland curriculum, which in turn allows ‘formalised’ private schools to take part in the national exams. Though private schools often do not follow the Somaliland curriculum, instead using curricula from other countries (as we shall see in the second case study), they are rarely denied or stripped of their licenses or forbidden from taking part in examinations.⁵⁶ This is partly because private schools continue to play an important role in delivering education, especially in urban centres. The Somaliland administration has no interest in limiting access to education without being able to offer adequate alternatives in the public sector. Though no reliable data exists on the evolution of private schools compared to public ones, a 2015 report prepared for the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) suggests that the enrolment rate in primary public schools has stagnated at 164,876 in the 2013-2014 academic year, compared to 165,017 the previous year. In comparison the primary private schools experienced an increase in the same period from 43,576 to 47,846 enrolled students.⁵⁷ This tendency is particularly visible in the cities. In the capital of Hargeisa, for instance, there were 75 private primary schools enrolled for the national exams in 2017, 22 more than the 53 public primary schools.⁵⁸

In sum, although the Somaliland state administration only played a limited role in re-establishing schools and the education sector, its role gradually increased. The new administration was successful in acting ‘like a state’, as exemplified by the Somaliland state officials sitting around a fax machine contacting the international organisation for financial support. Due to its gatekeeper position, the ministry of education became an important intermediary for other actors to work through. Moreover, state actors were careful to re-

appropriate former government buildings and schools of the collapsed Somali state, through which it (re)appropriated dominant images of the state. It also started paying some of the teachers and other staffs at school level and managed to produce a curriculum in which the national story of Somaliland could be narrated. Moreover, despite struggling to govern the private actors that increasingly deliver education in urban Somaliland, the state administration successfully placed themselves as crucial to the formalisation of schools.

What does all of this mean for the state's symbolic power? Is the state able to structure and influence interactions within the education sector, or do non-state actors organise the education sector independently of the state? In the following section, we discuss three examples of the state exercising its accumulated symbolic power in contemporary Somaliland's education sector. The three cases show, each in their own way, that non-state actors actively make use of the state framework and its policies in their practices of organising education delivery. We will begin with the ways in which the state's administrative reach is expanded in the education sector.

How schools become recognised by the state: routinised exercise of symbolic power

How do schools become recognised by the state? Let us look at a particular example from a primary school located in a village south of Hargeisa. The school was built in the colonial period but closed during the civil war in the late 1980s. In 1997, it was re-opened by two teachers living in the village. The two teachers mobilised some of the villagers to teach in the school. The reopening of the school was welcomed in the village and parents soon began sending their children to the school. The staff did not receive salaries until 2001, when a diaspora group began supporting the school.⁵⁹ The group was formed in the Somali diaspora in London with the purpose of supporting family members with the costs of funerals, marriages and other such

social events. An office was set up in Hargeisa to engage in other activities, such as supporting the village hospital and building a road connecting the village with Hargeisa. A current group member explains how connections to other diaspora members were created:

[O]ne of the other members knew some people living in Norway that are also from [our town] and we contacted them and asked. “Don’t you want to help us to do something in our old town?” [...] Later we made contact with diasporas in different countries: in Denmark, Sweden, Germany, even Australia and Japan. They are now also paying. We give US\$20 each per month. Ten of these go to the road we want to make and ten goes to school rehabilitation.⁶⁰

The chairman of the diaspora group did not disclose the total amount that the organisation receives monthly, but he did mention that they have approximately 300 paying members from across the world.⁶¹ However, it became increasingly difficult to finance the school’s running costs. Teacher salaries were paid late, and some teachers did not receive a salary altogether. In light of these financial problems, the current chairman of the group arranged a meeting with government officials at a hotel in Hargeisa in 2015. During the meeting it was agreed that the teachers’ salaries and other running costs would come under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE).⁶² The school would in return be recognised as a government school and officially become part of the state’s infrastructure. Moreover, the MoEHE promised to provide other materials like a fence to keep away hyenas. Representatives from the ministry visited the school shortly after the hotel meeting and placed the corner stone for the fence.

The example of this school provides additional evidence to the issues demonstrated in the historical section: practices of organising education delivery are initiated by non-state, local, and private actors, after which the state becomes involved. In other words, and linking back to the theoretical discussion, the state constitutes an ‘effect’ of practices in which a variety of

actors are engaged.

Without being very directly involved in the organisation of primary education in this particular school, the state administration extended its administrative reach. The organisation of the education sector at the local level, through the organisation and functioning of the school – further strengthened the ‘idea’ of the state and its symbolic power. Loveman calls this type of administrative extension ‘co-optation’.⁶³ She compares co-optation to a cooperative venture with the following example: ‘a church-run poorhouse or orphanage could be made a state institution with no change in staff and minor, if any, change in administrative practice.’⁶⁴ The government’s co-optation of the diaspora/community constructed school happened along similar lines, with limited effort and with no change in the daily management of the school, which continues with the same administration and staff. The school’s registration as a state school at the ministry brought only a few practical changes: an inspector from the ministry of education occasionally visits the school, some of the teachers are now on the government payroll, and the school is more likely to receive support from international donors.

More generally, the diaspora/community supported school is an illustration of broader dynamics in the state recognition of schools. As a legal advisor from the ministry of education explained: ‘[t]he [diaspora/community] group will pay teachers [and] hire teachers. Then they contact government and ask how [the ministry] can contribute. [For example,] maybe the government can pay fifty percent of the teachers’ salaries.’⁶⁵ While there are no written policies on how the state administration recognises ‘new’ schools and while this is decided on a case-by-case basis, a basic unwritten rule is that the state administration only recognises and supports a school when they are already up and running. As a member of the diaspora/community group puts it: ‘unless you start something – you don’t get anything.’⁶⁶ According to a staff member of the MoEHE, the community has to show that: ‘they have teachers [and] that there are enough students. Often there is some initial teaching first and then they come and ask for help. We have

limited resources so we need to be sure that the school will be used and doesn't close down soon after it has opened.'⁶⁷

This process of co-optation by the state can be seen as a mode of 'primitive accumulation of symbolic power'.⁶⁸ These practices have been routinised and naturalised into understandings of 'how things are done', which are generally accepted by the actors involved. This process involves clear advantages for the state: by involving non-state actors, it extends its reach and builds its symbolic power. In this example, the school was also promised a range of things by the state, which did not materialise. The fence, for example, was never constructed. Moreover, the diaspora group continues to finance teacher salaries, which MoEHE only partly covers.

This situation is not an exception: the state frequently fails to live up to its promises, illustrating that the state's symbolic power is not only based on financial resources. Nor is the symbolic power of the state only the result of the state enforcing its rules. Instead, non-state actors also invoke the state themselves, since relying on the state still has a number of advantages in 'getting the job done'. First, the state is productive in 'put[ting] together the small pieces to make it work' as the head teacher from the village school expresses it.⁶⁹ Though the state administration does not fully cover school expenses, it is helpful in covering some of the running costs, though this is minimal. Secondly, and maybe more importantly, the state framework becomes productive for non-state actors in gaining access to particular external resources. In the words of the chairman from the diaspora/community group: 'NGOs only support [us] when [the] government accepts [the school], so [we] want acknowledgement from the ministry.'⁷⁰ In other words, being part of the state infrastructure provides access to international donors and NGOs. Donors and NGOs do not support school projects without the authorisation from the state administration, or any other development project for that matter.⁷¹ Hence, the symbolic power of the state is also based on its position as a gatekeeper, through which other actors can connect and operate.

In sum, this case has shown two dynamics. On the one hand, non-state actors are central in providing public services. The diaspora, in collaboration with local actors, ensure that the school functions, including after the state reneged on its promises. This further illustrates that the distinction between state and non-state is not very clear-cut in the daily practices of delivering public education and how both statehood and public services are co-produced by state and non-state actors. On the other hand, these non-state actors continue to invoke the state and look for state registration, as it involves a range of advantages. It therefore shows how the state boundary is the outcome of interactions between schools and the state, and is actively produced and maintained by the actors involved. In this case, the village school actively looked for state registration and refers to the state when necessary.

Curriculum reform: co-production of text books between state and non-state actors

Why do non-state actors adhere to state policies, even though it goes against their interests? In this example, we explain how private schools partly implemented a public curriculum reform, although contrary to their business models.

Private schools in Hargeisa and other large urban centres in Somaliland market themselves by using curricula from other countries such as Kenya, Turkey, Sudan or elsewhere, taught in Arabic or English. Generally, parents perceive curricula from other educational systems to be better than the curriculum developed by the Somaliland administration. A parent, for example, exclaimed that private schools ‘are much better than the public schools. They teach better subjects. It’s like European education.’⁷² Offering foreign curricula taught in English or Arabic have hence become part of private schools’ business models.

In 2016, when the MoEHE published a new curriculum, it also introduced a reform stating that all private schools could only use the Somaliland curriculum. This was

complimented with a decree stating that primary education should be taught in Somali only. The reform came after public debate about the use of foreign curricula in private schools in Somaliland.⁷³ Seen from MoEHE's point of view the decree was merely a repetition of the 'National Education Act' from 2013, which states that: 'the national language shall be the main medium of instruction.'⁷⁴ In the eyes of private schools this was an unfair and unnecessary intervention in the business model of private schools. The conflict escalated in the summer of 2016 and a number of private school associations defending the interests of private schools stepped in to negotiate with the MoEHE. Private school associations function like unions, protecting the interests of private schools. Moreover, they provide different kinds of support, such as teacher training and school books, in return for a percentage of the income generated through school fees. A representative from a private school association explained how they negotiated with the state administration: '[a]ll private schools, I mean all the associations came together and met, like Al Huda, Noradeen, MASNO, Al Irshaad, Salaam [names of school associations]. They met in a hotel and we then went to the ministry and said "It's not possible"'.⁷⁵ The two parties, the private school associations and MoEHE, met several times over a period of three weeks in August 2016.

The outcome of the negotiations was that private schools should teach the new Somaliland curriculum, but they were allowed to use English or Arabic as the medium of instruction. As part of the deal, two associations, MASNO and Al Irshaad, joined forces under the name MASIR and translated the Somaliland curriculum into English. The new MASIR-produced text books were recognised by the MoEHE, and are now available next to books from the MoEHE. Moreover, a different association, Geeska Africa, is currently producing additional text books in Arabic to supplement the Somaliland curriculum in the subjects of Arabic and Islam.

When asked why the associations decided to negotiate with the state ministry, an

education manager from one of the private school associations answered that: '[p]olicies are written amendments. It never happened that we refuse these completely, we always negotiate with them [MoEHE].'⁷⁶ Private schools did not simply ignore the policy and decree from the state administration but agreed on a compromise, despite having no real interest in abiding by the reform. While teaching in Somali and using the Somaliland curriculum is against the business models of many private schools (since foreign curricula and Arabic or English as the media of instruction are preferred by many parents in Somaliland) they could not, or did not want to, completely ignore the state administration's rule. As the education manager of a private school association explains: 'without them [MoEHE], there is no value. Our certificate has no value [...] We need them because they are our government they rule [...] We are part of that system under the ministry.'⁷⁷ Put differently, although the reform goes against their own interests, schools still need the state. The state administration produces private school licenses, certificates and constructs national examinations needed to access secondary and university education.

The example shows that the state administration possesses enough symbolic power to forge negotiations with private actors. Although the reform was not implemented as intended, the state administration, as well as the overall idea of the reform, nonetheless shaped the sector. In other words, the idea that the state administration is the overall regulatory authority is not challenged. Instead, non-state contestations are limited to 'the mechanics or techniques of state practices that are [otherwise] recognised without question as such',⁷⁸ a central feature of the routinised exercise of symbolic power.

In the next example, we see that even though education policies and reforms are produced between meso-level state and non-state actors, state policies are also filtered through school-level power configurations.

Free education in Somaliland: filtering state policies

In the above cases, we have shown how the symbolic power of the Somaliland state manifests itself. Although not always producing the intended effects, it was still able to structure relations and interventions. Yet, this symbolic power is not absolute. In the next case, we further illustrate the negotiated nature of this symbolic power, which sometimes is insufficient for state policies to be implemented. We do so by looking at the case of free primary education.

Due to historically limited policy-involvement from the state – as outlined in the historical section above – it was striking when in 2011 Zamzam Abdi Aden, then minister of education, announced that all public primary schooling was to be fee-free. According to the current director of primary education, the idea was to: ‘increase enrolment especially for IDPs [internally displaced people] and the poor. At that time [before the introduction of ‘free primary education’] they didn’t go to school. Now every child has access.’⁷⁹ However, the policy was apparently unsuccessful: soon after the introduction of the policy, fees were collected again. A teacher explained that ‘the principal met with parents and told them that they wanted to collect fees again. They accepted [...] Before [the policy,] the teacher earned US\$50, now it’s US\$100. But everything is back to normal. Besides that, we earn more.’⁸⁰

Prior to the introduction of free education parents paid approximately US\$1 per child for one month of admission in public primary schools. The income from fees were spent on salaries for cleaners, as top-up salaries for teachers and to cover other running costs. In order to financially facilitate the policy measure, the government increased the budget for education and doubled teachers’ salaries from approximately US\$50 to US\$100,⁸¹ as mentioned by the teacher above. However, the government did not allocate any funding for running costs, such as general maintenance of school buildings, office supplies, benches, water or chalk. School could therefore not be maintained without reintroducing school fees, which is precisely what happened.

Although the state policy was rejected (i.e. fees are collected again) it still changed access to education in some schools. For example, a female head teacher explained how a deal to make education free for the poorest children was made with the parents:

We [the school management and the parents] had a meeting. The parent group called in the parents and we discussed with them and then they finally accepted [collecting fees]. They should pay fees again, but those from low-economy families should be able to come for free; parents with, for example, five students should be able to get some for free; and if the father has passed away it should be free also.⁸²

In a different school, a similar system was created. A young, newly-appointed head teacher explained that he decides who merits poverty-based exemptions from school fees, based on whether he feels they are 'poor enough': 'I see the physical situation of the child. The facial features, the kind of clothes they are wearing, how the parent look like and so on. Also sometimes I know the people living in the neighbourhood.'⁸³ The head teacher explained that he exempts fees for some children in large families. For example, if a parent can only afford school fees for two of seven children, he would let all seven children to attend with fees payed for two children, the other five accessing the school fee-free. In short, access can be negotiated depending on economic status between the parent (or a representative of the child's family) and the head teacher. It is important to mention that access to free education varies between schools. In some schools, the policy was completely rejected from the beginning, while in other schools the poorest parents have always been able to get free education or discounts. Moreover, different systems exist to attain from parents the finances necessary to run the school. In some schools, monies are collected directly from parents in the form of school fees, similarly to before the policy. In other schools, parents donate money on a case-by-case basis, when the school is in need of financial support. The different ways in which finances are mobilised from parents depends on negotiations between the school administration and the parent groups.

In sum, this case shows how the education sector is primarily organised locally. The final decision on whether or not to implement the policy is taken at the school and community level. In contrast to the previous example, the state policy in this case was rejected in most schools. Again, the actual organisation of primary education in Somaliland is largely located outside the realm of the state administration. In this case, the state administration does not have the power to determine how access to education is regulated. Instead, negotiations between head teachers and parent groups regulate this access.

Moreover, this case further illustrates the two-way nature of symbolic power. In the first example (of the state recognition of a school) it was shown that the state's symbolic power is co-produced by non-state actors. By actively looking for state-recognition, a non-state actor helped naturalise the state's presence and symbolic power. The flipside of this is that when non-state actors decide not to support the state, they can. The state's symbolic power is not powerful enough to completely shape the local-level negotiations and override local-level power configurations. This is what happened in the third example: while a minority of schools partially implemented the policy, the vast majority of schools decided to reject it.

Conclusions

Through the lens of the primary education sector, this paper has shown how the state continues to be organised in Somaliland between state and non-state actors. Relations between state and non-state actors in Somaliland are complex, hybridised and intertwined, blurring the distinctions between these two types of actors. Due to its lack of international recognition and its limited financial capacity, the state administration is not capable of regulating and financing education. This does not mean that the education sector has collapsed or that it depends entirely on the private sector. Instead, while the practices of non-state actors are central in the continued

provision of primary education services, the state administration continues to play an important role in structuring relations within the education sector: in a word, it ‘stays’.

The first example showed how both the state and non-state actors co-produce education services, an arrangement that benefits both actors. The state is able to extend its administrative reach and build symbolic power, while non-state actors gain some financial benefit. In doing so, we have shown the blurriness of state and non-state boundaries. The state’s boundary ‘never marks a real exterior’,⁸⁴ but is actively produced and maintained, reflecting the power relations at stake. The second case illustrated that the state does yield some symbolic power as non-state actors were forced to negotiate with the state over a curriculum reform. The outcome was not only a negotiated implementation of the reform but also additional text books, which became recognised by Somaliland’s state administration. In the last example the state’s free primary education policy was rejected. Only some schools implemented free primary education, and only in a partial manner. By looking at these cases, we have shown how the symbolic power of the state is constructed and used. The state’s policies, regulations, and administrative framework are used by different non-state actors, and become productive in their practices of organising education delivery. Yet this power itself is co-produced. In other words, the state administration only becomes naturalised when non-state actors decide to actively contribute (i.e. when it is in their interest).

To come back to the student’s question introducing this paper, the state (or more precisely ‘the idea of the state’) endures (or ‘stays’) because it is productive for non-state actors in their continuous practices of delivery primary education. Put differently, the state itself is an ‘effect’ of the variety of practices which take place in providing education services.

It is important to stress that the situation in Somaliland’s education sector should not be romanticised. For example, the everyday negotiations of access to ‘free education’ depending on loosely defined categories such being ‘who is poor enough’, can produce rather uneven

access to education. For example, it might vary according to people's connections to the head teacher, or individual abilities to convey that they are 'poor enough'. Likewise, personal connections between diaspora group members and officials in the ministry can also produce uneven and unjust access to networks of the state. As shown above, while there is a basic unwritten rule in recognising schools (they need to be 'up and running'), this is still decided on a case by case basis, meaning that personal connections and power again play a role in determining outcomes.

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Notes

- ¹ The question was posed to one of the authors during his first visit to Somaliland in 2014.
- ² Bekalo, Brophy and Welford, “The development of education,” 464.
- ³ Abdi, “Education in Somalia.”
- ⁴ Menkhaus, “Governance without government”; Raeymaekers, Menkhaus and Vlassenroot, “State and non-state regulation.”
- ⁵ Hagmann and Hoehne, “Failures of the State Failure.”
- ⁶ Hoehne, “Traditional authorities in Northern Somalia”; Hoehne, “Limits of hybrid political orders”; Bradbury, *Becoming Somaliland*; Renders and Terlinden, “Negotiating statehood in a hybrid”; Walls and Kibble, “Beyond polarity.” Note that Renders and Terlinden, “Negotiating statehood in a hybrid”; and especially Hoehne, “Limits of hybrid political orders” argue that while hybridity was productive in establishing political order in Somaliland it is now undermining both traditional and modern authorities.
- ⁷ War-torn Societies Project, *Rebuilding Somaliland*; Eubank, “Peace-building without external.”
- ⁸ World Bank, *Budget Policy*.
- ⁹ Ministry of Finance, *Budget 2017*.
- ¹⁰ Ministry of National Planning and Development, *Somaliland in figures, 13th edition*, 42
- ¹¹ The name of the village is anonymised.
- ¹² Migdal and Schlichte, “Rethinking the state.”
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, 14-15.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 15.
- ¹⁵ Mitchell, “The limits of the state,” 81.
- ¹⁶ Lund, “Twilight institutions,” 686.
- ¹⁷ This concept has been used to refer to the ways in which state and non-state actors co-produce governance. See Clements et. al., “State building reconsidered”; Boege, Brown and Nolan, *On hybrid political orders*; Meagher et al “Unravelling public authority”. Particularly for Somaliland, this concept has been used in a more specific meaning, i.e. to refer to the mixing of traditional and legal-rational (i.e. modern) authorities in the making of political order in Somaliland. See Renders and Terlinden, “Negotiating statehood in a hybrid”; Hoehne, “Limits of hybrid political orders”; Moe, “Hybrid and ‘everyday’ political ordering.”
- ¹⁸ Olivier de Sardan, “Researching practical norms”; Titeca and De Herdt, “Real governance beyond the ‘failed state’.”
- ¹⁹ Hagmann and Peclard, “Negotiating statehood.”
- ²⁰ Specifically for the education sector, see Titeca et al “God and Caesar”; De Herdt and Titeca “Governance with empty pockets”.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, 550.
- ²² Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 170.
- ²³ Hallet, “Symbolic power and organizational culture,” 133.
- ²⁴ Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power*, 170.
- ²⁵ Loveman, “The modern state,” 1658.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*
- ²⁸ Weber, *The Theory of Social*, 152-157.
- ²⁹ Von Trotha 2001 cited in Hagmann & Péclard, “Negotiating statehood,” 543.
- ³⁰ Migdal and Schlichte, “Rethinking the state.”
- ³¹ Nandy, “The Politics of Secularism.”
- ³² Gupta, “Blurred boundaries.”
- ³³ *Ibid.*, 389-390.
- ³⁴ Mitchell, “Society, economy and the state effect.”
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 83.
- ³⁶ *Ibid.*, 84.
- ³⁷ *Ibid.*, 83.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 84.
- ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 95.
- ⁴⁰ Compagnon, “Somali armed movements.”
- ⁴¹ Africa Watch, “Somalia: a government at war,” 3.

- ⁴² Abdi, “Education in Somalia”; Morah, “Old institutions, new opportunities”; Abdinoor, “Constructing Education”; Hoehne, “Education and peace-building.”
- ⁴³ The first ministry was called Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.
- ⁴⁴ Abdirahman Aw Ali, former minister of education, Hargeisa, March 28, 2017.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ This is a reference to *iska wax u qabso* – meaning something close to ‘help yourself’, which was a scheme developed during the reign of Siad Barre. In essence *iska wax u qabso* was a volunteer project in which people volunteered to construct roads, hospitals and schools (see Mukhtar, *Historical dictionary of Somalia*, 177; Ingiriis, *The Suicidal State*, 85-90). According to some interviewees the *iska wax u qabso* scheme was known colloquially as ‘forced voluntarism’.
- ⁴⁷ Hussein Elmi Warsame, former DG of MoEHE, Hareysa, February 14, 2017.
- ⁴⁸ Lindley, “Transnational connections”; Hoehne, “Diasporic Engagement”; Hoehne and Ibrahim, “Rebuilding Somaliland through economic.”
- ⁴⁹ Head teacher, Hargeisa, March 16, 2017.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid.
- ⁵¹ Former Director General of education, Hargeisa, April 2, 2017.
- ⁵² Ministry employee, Hargeisa, March 22, 2017.
- ⁵³ Williams and Cummings, “Education from the bottom up.”
- ⁵⁴ Abdullahi Yashin, November 23, 2017.
- ⁵⁵ Morah, “Old institutions, new opportunities”; Hassan and Robleh, “Islamic revival and education in Somalia”.
- ⁵⁶ The authors know of one case in which a private school was closed for a short period. This was due to suspicions of the school being funded by an organisation related to terrorism.
- ⁵⁷ Brown, *Final synthesis report for the joint review of the education sector, Somaliland*, 14
- ⁵⁸ Somaliland National Examination and Certification Board, *Grade 8 and form 4 report 2017*, 6.
- ⁵⁹ Belonging to an area does not necessarily mean being born in the area. It can also mean being part of the family (sub-clan) residing in the area.
- ⁶⁰ Diaspora group member, Hargeisa, April 5, 2017.
- ⁶¹ Chairman of community organization, December 23, 2017.
- ⁶² The ministry changed name to Ministry of Education and Science after the 2017 presidential election.
- ⁶³ Loveman, “The modern state,” 1662-1663.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid, 1663
- ⁶⁵ Interview with legal advisor, MoEHE, Hargeisa, 4 December 2017.
- ⁶⁶ Interview with community group member, Hargeisa, 02 December 2017.
- ⁶⁷ Interview with education coordinator, MoEHE, Hargeisa, 22 November 2017.
- ⁶⁸ Loveman, “The modern state,” 1659.
- ⁶⁹ Head teacher, village, July 16, 2016.
- ⁷⁰ Chairman of community group, Hargeisa, July 17, 2016.
- ⁷¹ The Somaliland administration is not officially recognised and can therefore not receive bilateral aid. Some development actors are less keen on working with an unrecognised states than others. Thus, all sorts of ‘gymnastics’, as one informant from an NGO put it, are made to tunnel and reach out for international aid.
- ⁷² Parent, July 6, 2016.
- ⁷³ Member of curriculum commission, July 18, 2016; see also Ahmed, “Somaliland: keep ideology out of k-12 education.”
- ⁷⁴ Ministry of Education and Higher Education, *National education act 2013*, 18.
- ⁷⁵ Education manager, private school association, Hargeisa, February 1, 2017.
- ⁷⁶ Education manager, private school association, Hargeisa, April 4, 2017.
- ⁷⁷ Ibid.
- ⁷⁸ Loveman, “The modern state,” 1659.
- ⁷⁹ Rahma Ibrahim, director of primary education, February 26, 2017.
- ⁸⁰ Primary teacher, Hargeisa, January 2, 2017.
- ⁸¹ Salaries are paid in Somaliland shillings in cash. Prior to the policy salaries were SLsh300.000 (approximately US\$50 plus top-up salaries from fees), the ministry doubled this to SLsh600.000. It was later raised to 700.000 which due to fluctuation in exchange rates still amounted to approximately

US\$100. Minimum salaries of teachers has recently been increased to SLsh800.000. Teachers with more seniority can earn SLsh920.000 per month.

⁸² Head teacher, Hargeisa, April 26, 2017.

⁸³ Head teacher, Hargeisa, April 3, 2017.

⁸⁴ Mitchell, "Society, economy and the state effect," 83.

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