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The Implications of Socio-Politics and Political Economy on Education Policy in Sudan: 1900 to 2000

Haytham Karar*

Abstract: This paper chronicles the education policies which Sudan has implemented during colonial, post-colonial, and modern era, particularly in the period between 1900 to 2000. The government strategy of the Condominium rule that divided Sudan into two regions with different administrations, engendered substantial repercussions on the education policy in the North and the South. Also, since the independence of Sudan in 1956, education was consistently used as a conduit for conveying the ideological preferences of people in political leadership. The Northerners' elites used educational establishments as normalizing institutions to promulgate a specific set of norms and values in a way that relegated the cultures and the values of other ethnicities. This paper explores the socio-politics and the economic policies that were implemented in the post-colonial Sudan and thereafter, and questions their implications on education policies. The paper concludes that the direction and the outcomes of education policy, whether negative or positive, depends on the orthodoxy of the political leadership as well as the political economy of the state.

Keywords: Sudan, South Sudan, education policy, industrialization policy, neoliberal policy

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Introduction

Sudan: the country that includes the territories of present Sudan and South Sudan - was colonized by the Anglo-Egyptian Condominium between 1899 and 1956. In 1899, the Mahdist state, which ruled Sudan from 1885 to 1898, was conquered by the Anglo-Egyptian army led by Major Herbert Kitchener (Seri-Hersch, 2017). Whereas sovereignty was vested in the hands of Britain and Egypt, actual military and civil administration power were entrusted to the Governor General in Sudan. Except for the financial administration, which was controlled by the Egyptian government, the Government-General had the full authority to decide on all governance matters of the country (Beshir, 1969). Lord Cromer, the British Council-General in Egypt and the mastermind of the Condominium agreement was entrusted with the planning of Sudan's administration policies (Currie, 1935).

Because Sudan was the largest country in Africa at that time, the British administration gave it a unique status to frustrate the French ambitions in the South. The country was ruled as two states nearly throughout the colonial period. The administration consisted of several hundreds of Britain relying on thousands of Egyptians, Syrians, and Sudanese clerks who worked as translators, accountants, tax collectors, and teachers. The population of Sudan consisted of different ethnic groups that include Arabic-speaking Muslims; the predominant majority in the north, non-Arabic-speaking Muslims such as Fur, Zaghawa and Masalit tribes in the west, and Beja tribe far to the east, as well as different linguistic and multi-religious groups in the south. Numerous local languages were used as a medium of communication in Southern Sudan such as Dinka, Nuer, Bari, Zande, Arabic local varieties, and English (Beshir, 1969).

In northern Sudan, institutionalized systems of education existed well before the Condominium times. For example, a huge network of traditional Koranic schools which taught Arabic reading and writing, basic arithmetic, and Islamic jurisprudence was established during the Islamization period in the 14th century. Furthermore, during the dual colonization of Ottoman-Egyptian in the 19th century, educational facilities were immensely expanded. Also, Italian Catholic and Protestant missions established several schools in a few towns and cities. Nevertheless, during the Mahdist state, traditional schools reemerged as a primary source of education while missionary and state schools dissolved gradually. In the South, however, information on educational systems was very limited. Harsh climatic conditions and hostile attitudes of local populations prevented the colonizers from settling and developing any form of educational system (Seri-Hersch, 2017).

Foucault (1982) insists on the critical role of institutions on the establishment of power relations. More so, his work indicates that analyzing in-

stitutions from a standpoint of power relations can reveal the fundamental nature of relationships at the grassroots level that is embodied and crystallized in these institutions. Accordingly, educational establishments represent normalizing institutions that produce individuals who are obedient to authority and overly respectful to boundaries of appropriate behavior. This paper chronicle education policies which Sudan has implemented during colonial, post-colonial, and modern era, particularly in the period between 1900 to 2000. The paper explores specific government system that imposed by the Condominium rule as well as the socio-politics and the economic policies that were implemented during the post-colonial era and thereafter, and questions their implications on different education policies enforced by the state.

Educational disparities in colonial Sudan: 1900– 1947

The British administration ruled Sudan as two regions with different socio-cultural systems: the predominantly Muslem and Arabic-speaking north and the multilingual and multi-religious south. Education policy at the time was similar to the administration policy. The British administration developed a government-controlled education system in the north, while a *laissez-faire* policy was adopted in the south; a strategy that ended in 1948 after the southern policy was revoked. The schools in the South were established by Christian missionaries; Anglican Church society, the Roman Catholic and American Presbyterian mission (Ruay, 1990). In the North, however, public schools coexisted with a network of Egyptian, missionary and community-based schools. While Arabic and English were the medium of instruction in the North, the linguistic situation was too complicated in the South. Consequently, missionary schools used a variety of languages as a medium of instruction such as Romanized Arabic, English, and local languages (Seri-Hersch, 2017).

State-controlled policy in the North

Throughout the colonization period, different forms of school systems existed in the north. Beside Egyptian schools that controlled by the Egyptian Department of Education, various types of private schools such as missionary schools, community schools and the so-called people's school, all emerged as sites of learning. Missionary schools were established in different towns in Sudan by both Protestant and Roman Catholic groups. However, the British authorities sought to limit their activities to quell Northerners' suspicion of proselytization and to avoid antagonizing the predominantly Muslims population (Beshir, 1969).

Since the early years of the Condominium, the British administration enacted a state-controlled education policy in the north. In 1901, James Currie, the Director of Education in Sudan, highlighted three primary objectives of the education policy in northern Sudan. The policy aimed at producing a competent artisan class, empowering the people to understand the machinery of the government and its elements, particularly impartial administration of justice, and, finally, preparing administrative professionals that are qualified to fill in many minor government job vacancies (Currie, 1935).

Being that as it may, the government established new institutions to achieve these goals. The traditional schools were given state subsidies to intensify secular subjects such as Arabic literacy and arithmetic. Between 1918 and 1930, the number of educational facilities grew from 6 subsidized schools to 768 (Bashir, 1969). In the same vein, an additional level of elementary school (Kuttāb) was added to the educational system to supplant traditional schooling in the long run. The financial budget allocated to education represented less than 4 percent of Sudan's government annual expenditure (Bashir, 1969). Therefore, the government prioritized its meager financial resources for education towards expanding the school system. Consequently, many towns in the north were equipped with elementary and intermediate schools.

The Gordon Memorial College (GMC), which was inaugurated by Herbert Kitchener in 1902, was the sole secondary school in Sudan until 1940. The college was named after the British officer who was killed by the Mahdist forces in Khartoum in 1885. GMC students adopted a two-year general education before specializing in a variety of administrative concentrations. The blueprints outlined by Currie embodied in the government's educational policy that took place between 1900 and 1930s. The colonial educators handled a daunting task of creating a small national elite class that planned to be qualified to fill in the administrative positions while remaining compliant with the regime. In 1930, the classic colonial problem of educating local people without subverting them was predominant in the North (Mangana, 2010).

laissez-faire education policy in the South

The education policy in the south was similar to other policies that promoted in different regions across British Africa. For instance, British authorities adopted a laissez-faire strategy in the colonial territories in the region of East Africa allowing Christian missions to monopolize the education sector (Sanderson, 1962). The tropical climate combined with the multilingual population were the potential drive forces behind promoting this policy in the south. Because their activities were limited in the north, so many Chris-

tian missions opted to launch schools in the south. This movement started during the period of Governor -General Francis Wingate.

Generally, the history of education in colonial Southern Sudan was characterized by two distinct phases. The first phase took place between 1900 and 1926. Throughout this period, educational affairs were monopolized by Christian missions. The second phase that took place between 1926 and 1948 witnessed a gradual governmental intervention in the education system that resulted in the government holding full authority over the education policy. Missionaries established several types of educational institutions such as village schools, elementary schools, and trade schools. The curricula that were adopted by these institutions were diverse, and the medium of instruction was usually the local language in village schools and English language in elementary and intermediate schools (Sanderson, 1962).

Obsessed with the danger posed by fanatical Islam, the British administration decided to restrict access to the South in order to reduce Northern cultural dominance and slave trade. The colonial authorities articulated the Closed District Order in 1922, through which the Southern policy¹ was enforced (Ruay, 1990). The Southern policy laid the foundation for the British to formalize a language policy that allowed vernacular languages to be taught in primary schools instead of the Arabic language while designating English as the official language in government offices. The development of trade and administration required a language of communication between traders and administrators on one hand, and the local population on the other hand. The development of vernacular language, however, had an adverse effect on the growth of education. Despite the restrictive policy that was intended to limit the expansion of Arabic language, its use as a medium of communication had substantially increased (Beshir, 1969).

The issue of language was the subject of the Rajaf conference held in 1928. The main themes of the conference were to accommodate a list of common languages in the south and choose some of them as mediums of instruction (Albino, 1970). With the Closed District Order enforced, Mr J.H.

¹ The relationship between the North and the South characterized by hostility and mistrust due to racism and the legacy of slave trade and cattle raiding which was institutionalized by Northern merchants. This legacy influenced the British colonialists who viewed the Southerners as victims of their Northerners counterparts and considered Islamization and the Arab culture as a critical threat to the stabilization of the South. Thus, the British administration adopted the Southern policy which entailed isolating the South to hinder the promulgation of Islamic and Arab culture, and therefore exploitation by the North. In 1920, the Condominium rule decided to administer the two regions of North and the South separately and announced the South as a closed district. Muslim government clerics were withdrawn and replaced by Christian middle eastern clerics whereas Northern merchants were not allowed to settle in the South without permission. Also, the English language was introduced as the official language of government. For more information refer to (Rahim, 1966) titled: "The Development of British Policy in the Southern Sudan 1899-1947".

Matthew, the Secretary of Education and Health, emphasized the urgency to fulfil the demand for Southerners staff in the following few years to replace their Northerners counterparts. The conference concludes that educational development should not focus on the destruction of local social institutions or disconnecting the local people from their national background, but at encouraging them and their institutions to adapt to the changing conditions (Abdelhay et al., 2016).

The objective of the education policy in the South as in the North was not intended to detribalize but to make students better members in society. To achieve this aim, missionary teachers were encouraged to learn native languages and cultures with a view that aimed at accommodating tribal history in schools. However, the school curricula were to be more focused on tribal agriculture compared to literary subjects. Entry to elementary schools was set to be at a younger age so that the boys would find it easy to return to their tribal life before acquiring the colonizers' and Northerners' habits. Missions were asked to admit boys who came from better classes rather than waifs and strays. Such a concept was basically the same as those advocated for the North during the period of the triumph of the native administration² (Beshir, 1969).

But drafting a policy is one thing and effectively executing it is another level of challenge. The real incongruous between missionaries and the government was only one obstacle. Although Christian missions accepted the idea of educating natives of better classes, few were achieving it, either because they failed to find the better boys or because the concept did not align well with their religious ethics. They could not deny education from a Christian point of view to waifs and strays.

Because the *laissez-faire* policy in the South was intended to supplant the North hegemony, there was an urgency to add a post-elementary educational system to fill in the employment gaps in the public administration. The use of English in these post-elementary schools as a language of instruction was necessary for employment as minor clerks were bound again to trigger detribalization. Technically, the use of English was improving at a glacial pace because of the lack of textbooks and the inability of Italian missionaries, who were the majority at that time, to teach English. Meanwhile, Arabic language was spreading among the local population, as merchants

² Lord Milner, the British Council General was concerned about the Egyptian influence on the nascent class of Western-educated Northern elites who had a rudimentary aspiration for nationalization and unity with Egypt. He firmly discouraged any recognition of this class who would presumably inherit the judicial and the administrative tasks of British officials. Therefore, he proposed a system of Indirect Rule whereby the function of government descends to the traditional leaders instead of the elites (Collins, 2008, 37). Accordingly, the sons of the traditional leaders were given special privileges regarding the entrance to intermediate and secondary schools (Beshir, 1969, p. 163).

and officials from Arab origin immensely propelled the expansion of the language, despite the efforts exerted by the Southern administration to contain it. Consequently, the Southern policy was completely reversed in 1947 and the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan was already characterized by two separate administrations with the South disproportionately lagging in terms of educational services (Ruay, 1970).

De-colonization and education policy: 1946 - 1957

The last colonial decade heralded rapid expansion and changes in the educational field. The unification process of the education policy promoted by the Northern elites was meant to subsume the Southern curriculum into the Northern programs and to re-introduce Arabic language as a medium of instruction. Missionary and other private schools were nationalized right after Sudan gained independence in 1957 (Sanderson, 1980). However, the establishment of the Advisory Council for northern Sudan in 1944 laid the foundation of the nationalization and signaled the end of the native administration.

The educational plan, that spanned between 1946 to 1956, aimed at developing the educational system so as to meet higher levels; a step that set an urgency to develop a corresponding administrative system. The importance of education as a prerequisite to economic development was recognized by policy makers during the time. Educated Sudanese, on the other hand, shared the same view and they successfully established many secondary schools like Ahlia, Congress, and Ahfad secondary schools, through a voluntary contribution and assistance from the Egyptian government.

However, the ten-years educational plan was only concerned with education matters in the North. In 1946, the plan was presented to the advisory Council with a primary goal of preparing the Sudanese people, mainly the Northerners, to absorb the impending political, administrative, and economic changes that were about to follow the independence. To achieve that goal, the plan focused on adult and youth education. It also emphasized on reforming the intermediate and secondary school education to improve the standards of admission to post-Secondary higher education. Consequently, a new schooling system composed of four-years elementary, two-years intermediate, and then either four-years junior secondary or six-years senior secondary was promoted and enforced (Beshir, 1969).

In the meantime, the Southern education policy had not changed. The government committed to financially support the Christian missions to employ more British educationalists. However, the Graduates Congress; the Northern intelligentsia, turned its attention to the British administrative policy in the South. The Congress demanded to repeal the Closed District Ord-

nance; the cancellation of subsidies to missionary schools; and the unification of the education policy (Ruay, 1994). The Graduate Congress denounced the educational system in the South and counting it as the primary reason behind the backwardness of the Southern people. According to the Northern intelligentsia, Southerner's problem will only be solved if the education policy is unified; a policy that entailed using Arabic language as a lingua franca. The improvement of the socioeconomic conditions in the South was only seen possible through the lens of unconditional social and economic integration with the South.

The strategy of reducing the presence of Christian missions in Sudan was noticeable during the process of independence. Under this strategy, missionaries in the South became the immediate target. The British administration and the Northern elites convinced that homogenized education policy needs to be adopted in the North as well as the South, and the Arabic language should be reintroduced as the medium of instruction in the South. Therefore, the Legislative Assembly approved the Northern and Southern plan in 1946 and 1951 respectively to fulfil that aim. Consequently, the government allocated 10 percent of the national budget to the Northern plan and secured 15 percent to the Southern plan (Beshir, 1969).

The government undertook to nationalize all missionary schools in Sudan on the ground of that one of its fundamental responsibilities was to assume the task of education across the country. Christian missionaries who were based in Sudan were encouraged to leave and those who were seeking access were not allowed (Ruay, 1990). By 1957, the Ministry of Education gained full authority over a vast number of schools in the South.

Industrialization and education policy: 1956 – 1969

Like other colonized countries in Africa, Sudan inherited an educational system that was primarily designed to serve the needs of the colonial power. Among a variety of different challenges, the vocational shortage constituted a profound conundrum in the post-colonial Sudan (Dafa'Alla et al., 2016). Other challenges pertained to increasing the national income and improving the living standards of the people. The first modern consensus of 1956 estimates the total population in Sudan to be 10.3 million (Lees & Brooks, 1977).

The British administration avoided to invest in modern industry, and decided to keep Sudan as a market for industrial products and a source of raw materials. The rising demand for raw materials in the textile industry derived the British administration to the intensify cotton production, primarily in the Gezira Scheme: the large-scale cotton cultivation enclave in the Gezira province. Therefore, the first national government ensured to align the industrial policy with the first National Development Plan. This plan was

concerned with building the national identity, investing in infrastructure, and accelerating the development (Dafa'Alla et al., 2016).

The independence of Sudan brought much optimism to the Sudanese people. However, the suffering began with the indigenous rulers; the colonized elites. The governance ruling in Sudan was alternatively exchanged between military and civil rule. The country endured a wide range of political upheavals sprung shortly after independence. In less than six-month, the political parties unveiled opposing views on government, sacked the first Prime Minister and formed a coalition to run the state (Collins, 2008). The coalition government did not last long before it was overthrown by the first coup d'état led by General Abbud (1958-1964). The political instability resumed and several other military coups were attempted but without success.

Industrialization was looked upon by the developing countries as a tangible solution to tackle endemic poverty and economic dependency. Likewise, the industrialization policy in Sudan, like other countries in the developing world, was entirely reliant on the agriculture sector. The contribution of the agriculture sector to the Gross Domestic Production (GDP) was about 40 percent and employed nearly 80 percent of labor force (Awad, 1983). Sudan endured severe economic recession after the global deterioration of staple commodity export price, particularly cotton commodity. Therefore, the national government adopted an industrial policy that aimed to encourage agriculture diversification and industrialization between 1956 and 1960. The intention was to shift the economy from import substitution of consumer goods to import substitution of intermediaries. The new policy was enforced to stabilize foreign exchange income through Import-Substitution Industrialization (ISI) and export promotion (Wohlmuth, 1989). The policy drew a clear distinction between public and private sectors. The government focused on infrastructure and large-scale agricultural project while the private capital become the engine of the industrial growth (Wohlmuth, 1989).

The new policy was followed by enacting the Approved Enterprise Act of 1956 that designed to attract foreign capital investment and encouraged private sector growth (Lees & Brooks, 1977). The ratification of the Industrial Bank of Sudan act in 1961 was another step taken by the government to develop the industrial sector. The act was designed to fill the gap of the credit system and to provide long-term loans to promote private industrial enterprises (Lees & Brooks, 1977). Also, the Ten-Years plan that began in 1961 to 1971 constituted the first endeavor to nationally formulate and execute a comprehensive development plan with the intention to raise the per capita income; increase export and import substitution; and expand the state welfare (Lees & Brooks, 1977).

The government's expansionary strategy entailed heavy investment in large-scale agro-industry which resulted in raising the industrial sector's

contribution to the GDP, which hovered 10 percent in 1972 compared to a negligible share during the colonial era. However, this policy encountered many internal challenges such as weak domestic markets, low purchasing power, inadequate infrastructure, and lack of skilled and trained workers. Also, the lack of coordination between the industrial planning and agricultural department has led to periodic raw material shortages (Lees & Brooks, 1977).

Education was a great challenge to the industrialization policy. The education systems which were inherited from the British administration were designed to provide few civil servants to serve the colonial administration than to educate the Sudanese people. Schools were concentrated in Khartoum city and, to a lesser extent, in other urban cities, although the population was predominantly rural. Many considerable changes in the educational spectrum happened in response to political attitudes rather than to educational needs. The Arabization orientation in the education system became a reality during the early years after independence. In 1957, Abdalla Khalil, the prime minister, enforced the Arabic language to be the medium of instruction in all missionary schools (Collins, 2008).

Islamization in the South followed the blueprints of the Arabization process; however, at a glacial pace. First, Islamic schools were established, then followed by changing the weekly rest day in the Southern region from Sunday to Friday; the holy day of prayer in Islam. These transformations came in line with developments in the industrial sector, which propelled maintaining a bright image of the government and keeping the public pleased with their rulers. However, these changes were followed by demonstration and strikes and led to the deterioration of the schooling system (Collins, 2008).

Therefore, there was an urgency to review the education system to achieve the first and foremost goal of providing skilled workers to mitigate the dire shortage in labor force that could serve other needs of the Sudanese society other than work as Civil Servants. Being that as it may, the government of Sudan took the full authority over the curriculum formulation by designating the National Center for Curriculum Development and Educational Research (NCCDER), which was under the authority of the Ministry of Education, to handle the responsibility of developing the national curriculum. The curriculum beyond primary school followed the blueprints of the British administration. Despite all students learned Arabic and English in the intermediate and secondary schools, the language of instruction at the University of Khartoum; previously known as Gordon College, was only English.

The new education policy brought to the foreground the issue of the vocational shortage; emphasized on increasing the national productivity, achieving national integration, and accelerating the process of national modernization (Dafa'Alla et al., 2016). However, the increasing demand for

intermediate, secondary and higher education level exerted much pressure on the government to continue relying on expensive foreign teachers while education service was provided for free to attract many students, especially in rural areas in western Sudan, where the nomad nature of society made it difficult for families to enroll their children. The government also offered students free shelter, food and paid the travel expenses to visit their families during school holidays.

Import-substitution industrialization (ISI) and education policy: 1969 - 1985

The economic policy in Sudan witnessed a swift change when Colonel Numeiri seized power in 1969 through a coup d'état. The socialist revolution declared a radical strategy that entailed economic nationalization and enforced obfuscation of all private enterprises, including foreign investments. By 1970, the public sector represented more than 50 percent of the country's GDP (Gutiérrez & Schönwälder, 2000). However, in 1971, another shift in the regime's orientation took place following a failed coup orchestrated by the Communist party. Accordingly, the Sudanese foreign relations with the Socialist Bloc were declined in favor of the West, China, and Arab states. In 1972, the government enacted the Development and Encouragement of Industrial Investment which translated into the ambitious Bread-basket strategy³. Accordingly, the agriculture development plan shifted from the traditional sector to mechanized rain-fed sector and the huge irrigated sector. The seven-year plan (1970 to 1977) aimed at establishing a stable industrial platform mainly for self-sufficiency in basic consumption areas, making use of local raw materials and modernizing traditional industries (Oesterdiekhoff & Wohlmuth, 1983).

Despite employing more than 4 million people on 2 million smallholder farms and providing 2 million seasonal laborers in other sectors, the traditional agriculture sector was severely neglected (Wohlmuth, 1989). Instead, the Gezira Scheme; a large irrigated agriculture corporation that has a cultivable area of three million faddans, was the primary source of cotton production. This project was the primary source for the national export and market development. It was the backbone of the industrialization policy and

³ In the early 1970s, the government declared an ambitious development program, the main objectives of which were to diversify the country's export base, promote import-substituting industries, and alleviate the country's severe infrastructural deficiencies, particularly in the transport and energy sectors. A number of large-scale agricultural and agro-industrial projects hailed to make Sudan the bread-basket of the Arab Gulf states by the mid-1980s. For more information refer to (Brown 1968, 488).

spearheaded the plans to diversify agricultural production and the vertical integration of its output with national industry (Wohlmuth, 1989).

Between 1966 to 1971, 70 percent of the industrial establishment was found to be in the capital city of Khartoum. The rising population growth, which was doubling every decade, has immensely motivated this trend. Also, the per capita income in the capital city was higher than the national average, and the financial sector was well-developed compared to other parts in the country (Lees & Brooks, 1977). The availability of better network infrastructure and electric power played a pivotal role in concentrating all services in the capital.

Capital participation was promoted and institutional innovations such as the Sudan Development Corporation established as a hub for foreign and national private and public capital. However, the government disproportionately established large-scale projects in the North while abandoning the South. The failure of the economic development combined with the twofold strategy, which deprived the South of getting equal development, was disappointing to the Southern people and motivated the eruption of the second civil war (Collins, 2008).

Before the Ten-Year Plan (1961-1971), the government budgets never showed a deficit. However, at the beginning of the Ten-Year Plan, the annual debt service was about 4 percent of the annual export earnings of the country (Awad, 1983). Between 1965 and 1970, the government's demand for imports was inelastic while its expenditure was increasing apace (Lees & Brooks, 1977). The expansionary strategy of the central government, particularly the heavy investment in subsidized mechanized sector, led to a substantial budget deficit during the same time span. Because of the rising maintenance expenditure, the irrigation sector became a burden on the industrialization policy and the economy. By 1986 Sudan was highly indebted country with around 1.5 billion dollars and export figure as low as 310 million dollars (Wohlmuth, 1989). Between 1970 and 1988, Sudan was the ninth largest aid recipient with about \$9.6 billion in foreign aid, and the World Bank categorized the country in a group of African countries that failed in debt trap insofar as rescheduling adjustments were no longer considered adequate (World Bank, 1990)

The leadership during the second military rule led by Numeiri (1969-1985) was looked upon with hope and ambitions. It was a combination of young and intellectual leaders with military experience. The new government viewed the current education system as a major impediment to national development. Consequently, an education conference was held in May 1970 with the main objective of formulating a citizen that is vocationally capable, nationally integral, and socially interactive. The conference produced a new education policy that engendered changing the educational system

from 4-years primary level, 4-years intermediate level, and 4-years higher education level to a 6-years elementary level, 3-years Secondary level, and 3-years upper secondary level (Moulton, 1988).

The policy also introduced a compulsory elementary education even in nomadic areas and emphasized on diversifying the educational system particularly in the higher level to produce more technical specialties. The policy also laid the foundation for establishing polytechnic schools to absorb primary schools' leavers. However, regional disparity in the education service was noticeable between the North and the South (Moulton, 1988). Also, the government imposed Arabic language as a medium of instruction in the education system and employed the principles of socialism by providing the education for free to all citizens and, it was compulsory for all children in the school age. By 1972, the government allocated around 5 percent of the Gross National Product (GNP) to the education sector (Moulton, 1988). The new policy also exerted much attention to vocational education at all levels.

The transformation in education policy came in line with the development in industrialization, which glorified the image of the ruler in the eyes of the public. Meanwhile, the educational plan was in favor of quantity rather than quality. Therefore, the focus was on expanding school infrastructure rather than curriculum development. However, the education policy continued to be disproportionate towards the South. In 1980, less than 14 percent out of the 5,400 primary schools in Sudan were located in the South, which represented around 33 percent of the total population (Deng, 2003). It is worth indicating that the majority of schools in the South were built during the Southern Regional administration. However, the development of higher education in Southern Sudan started with the establishment of the University of Juba in 1978. The university was established as part of the Addis Ababa Peace agreement⁴ (1972 to 1983) which Nimeiri negotiated with the Southern rebels.

By 1984, a new paradigm indicating the Islamization of the national identity was introduced by the political leadership and that was immediately translated into the education policy. A national conference for education held in 1984 heralded the imposition of Islamic discourse in the education system. The imposition of Islamization and Arabization in the education system was a major driver of the second civil war in 1983.

⁴ The Government of Sudan, led under the presidency of Nimeiri, and the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM), led by Joseph Lagu, signed the Addis Ababa Agreement on March 1972 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The agreement ended a long civil war that started since 1955. According to Addis Ababa Agreement, the South was given political and administrative autonomy. For more information refer to Collins (2008).

Neoliberalism and education policy: 1980 to 2000

Since 1978, Sudan's economy endured severe and continuous balance-of-payments crisis. The government's expansionary strategy severely strained the economy while earlier attempts for economic diversification achieved limited success. In 1983, the government embarked on a three-years public investment program that was rescinded in the following year when the same government introduced, and swiftly executed, the Islamization policy of the economy. By 1987, the government announced the economic recovery program that intended to reform the trade; regulate the exchange rate; reduce budget deficit and curtail subsidies; and encourage export and privatization. However, the Islamization of the banking system engendered unfavorable environment for foreign investment in Sudan. Also, the Islamization policy encountered many economic realities including a dramatic lack of foreign currency, increasing isolation of the country, and, consequently, intricacy of finding investors willing to countervail Western pressure (Gutiérrez & Schönwälder, 2000).

During the 1980s, Sudan suffered a cascade of political upheavals that shook its traditional institutions and its economy. Throughout 1984, Numeiri's regime lurched from one crisis to another, and people's discontent with the economic policies was mounting. When Numeiri was ousted in 1985, his political party dissolved as did his elaborate security apparatus. The military transition government and the democratically elected coalition government, that followed after, led by Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi, both failed to address the country's economic crisis (Holt & Daly, 2011). Economic mismanagement and natural disasters immensely contributed to the economic distress. The national debt grew at an alarming rate and national resources were insufficient to service the debt. The second civil war, which erupted in 1983, consumed much of the government's budget. The Sudanese People Liberation Army (SPLA); the army wing of the Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM), under the leadership of Colonel John Garang, led the war against the central government in Khartoum.

By June 1989, a military coup led by Colonel Umar Al-Bashir overthrew the civil government of Al-Sadiq al-Mahdi. The new regime systematically dominated the economic sphere, particularly the agriculture sector and promoted a strategy of economic independence and self-sufficiency (Gutiérrez & Schönwälder, 2000). In light of the new government, Sudan's economy was internally strained by the civil war, and externally by the political and economic isolation. Meanwhile, the SPLA/M denounced the political change and resumed the war against the central government in Khartoum. By 1991, the SPLA gained control over nearly one-third of the country. The rebel movement not only managed to shut down Chevron's oil production, but

it also crippled the government's projects in Jongoly Canal; a strategy that posed detrimental consequences on the national economy.

In 1992, Sudan's economic policy witnessed a dramatic change when the government adopted the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The neoliberal policy was introduced at different levels. The decentralization strategy (1991 to 1994) began with cascades of constitutional decrees that culminated by articulating the devolution of power from the central authority into a more federal system that divided Sudan into 26 provinces (Berridge, 2017). Meanwhile, the government implemented different measures to curtail subsidies. In the same vein, the state forfeited its economic role by downsizing the public sector while encouraging the private sector to lead the economic growth (Gutiérrez & Schönwälder, 2000). However, the IMF recommendations were enforced without employing the necessary corrective measures that required to mitigate the corresponding social costs.

Also, the new regime declared Islam and Arabization as the national identity of Sudan; a step that set the necessity to employ a corresponding shift in the education system. In 1990, the government convened an educational conference with three key objectives. First, to integrate Islam into the society, especially among the youth, and to reconstruct the individual based on religious teachings. Second, to spread and strengthen the spirit of nationalism. Third, to build a self-dependent community and harness the potential energy of the nation (Gadir, 2015).

Accordingly, the government dissolved the pre-higher education stage and extended the six-year Elementary level to eight-year Foundational level followed by a three-year Secondary level. Also, the government stressed the new identity discourse by adding new subjects that serve its Islamization discourse to the national curriculum. When the government dissolved the intermediate stage, existing teachers of the old Elementary and Secondary levels were recruited in response to the increasing demand for teachers at the Foundation stage, without proper training (Dafa'Alla et al., 2016).

The government's strategy to capitalize on the quantity at the expense of the quality was obvious in the higher education stage. As part of the Economic Salvation Program⁵, the government introduced a comprehensive higher education reform plan. Among other goals, the plan was intended

⁵ The three-years Economic Salvation program (1990-1993) aimed at boosting the economy through the privatization of public corporations, price deregulation, reallocation of resources in favor of agriculture production to achieve food security and to increase export revenues, and achievement of fiscal balance. The government announced a homegrown program called the Sudan's Structural Adjustment Program (SSAP) which designed to appease the IMF and seek a balance of payment support in subsequent negotiations. For more information refer to (Musa 2001) titled "Sudan Structural Adjustment Program (SSAP): Some Implications for Labor in the Formal Sector".

to increase the number of higher education institutions, decrease the public spending on higher education while encouraging privatization, and impose the Arabization and Islamization of teaching and learning (Babyesiza, 2012). Many under-resourced universities were established and Islamic subjects were added to the curriculum. Vocational schools were absorbed into the Higher Education Stage, which led to a substantial expansion of the higher education level at the expense of the shrinking vocational stage. This radical change has had detrimental consequences on educational outcomes. The link between the education system, the National Development Program, and the market was substantially disintegrated. And, that has immensely contributed to widening the skill gap, increasing the unemployment rate, lowering the standards of living, and weakening the economy (Dafa'Alla et al., 2016).

Conclusion

Education is deeply implicated in the sociopolitical culture. And, the curriculum is never a neutral aggregation of knowledge, somehow appears in textbooks or classrooms. Rather, it always reflects the power dynamics at the grassroots level. Curriculum produce out of cultural, political and economic conflicts. Therefore, it articulates the power relations between the state and society; represents selective traditions; and promotes certain values and norms, particularly in multiracial societies such as the case of Sudan.

The end goal of education is to emphasize the maximum development of society. Education is a tool for developing individuals according to the needs and demands of their society. Through the lens of the state, good education is the only one that is directly tied to the economic needs. Therefore, the objectives of education may include production of knowledge, formation of character, vocational training and other societal preferences. Being that as it may, Sudan has inherited educational system that was deliberately designed to satisfy the needs of the colonial power rather than to develop the national society.

When Sudan gained its independence in 1956, the socio-economic disparities between the North and the South were substantially noticeable. The gap in the access to education services was staggering at all levels whereas the South had a negligible share compared with the size of its population. Education policy in Sudan has gone through multiple phases; each has its distinctive influence in the education system. Education has always been a conduit for conveying ideological discourses by different regimes. It is one of the critical fields through which political and religious ideologies has been practiced and imposed.

Not surprisingly, the successive post-independence governments, dominated by Northern elites, promoted the Northern educational system and

adopted Islamic culture as a key determinant of the national identity and a prerequisite for united and prosperous Sudan. The cultural and religious diversity was always seen by the Northern intelligentsia as a major threat to Islam and Islamic culture and so the education policy was used as a potential tool to gradually eliminate religious diversity. Therefore, the period between 1956 and 1969 witnessed the consolidation of the two-educational systems; the imposition of the Arabic language in the school curriculum; and a heavy crackdown on missionary schools in the South. The socio-economic disparity that was scandalously created by the lack of education in the South during colonial Sudan also reflected in the post-independence era. The substantial disparity in education services between the North and the South in post-colonial Sudan was an influential factor that laid the foundation for the eventual secession of the South in 2011.

Also, Sudan witnessed cascades of structural changes in the economy and the education sector. From the economic perspective, Sudan was a typical case of Africa's crisis of industrialization. The catastrophic implications of the Import-Substitution Industrialization (ISI) policy on the balance of payments were characteristics of the mid-1980s. Public investments had risen by nearly 50 percent in real terms between 1972 and 1974. The national development plans, especially after 1973, were in favor of large-scale investments in the North, which engendered socio-economic disparities between the two regions in a way that undermined the basis of industrialization. Accordingly, the savings declined from 10 percent in 1970 to only 3 percent in 1978 and the balance of payments worsened in 1982 with negative 42 million dollars (World Bank, 1984).

The implications of the industrial policy on the education sector were tangible. The Ministry of Education announced an expansionary program between 1972 and 1977 that eventually culminated in making the elementary education compulsory across the country. Accordingly, the number of enrolled pupils in the primary level had risen from 36.9 percent to 62.8 percent during the same time span. Also, during Nimeiri's reign (1969 to 1985), the first higher education law was passed, and two new universities –Juba and Gezira Universities- were established in the Southern and central regions respectively (Babysiza, 2012). Between 1970 and 1973, the government's spending in the education sector accounted for around 11 percent of the annual budget (Moulton, 1988). Also, the number of enrolled students in the secondary level had risen from 3 percent to 18 percent between 1960 to 1981 (World Bank, 1984).

The relation between Sudan and the IMF can be traced back to 1978, when Sudan requested assistance in dealing with its growing balance of payments and increasing foreign debt that was estimated to be around US\$2.3 billion (Brown, 1992). Therefore, during the 1980s, the government of Sudan

endorsed the Adjustment Structural Programs: this step that signaled the beginning of Sudan's neoliberal policy. The approval of Sudan Permanent Constitution in 1998 formalized the devolution of power from the center to the states. However, the center retained the administrative authority on technical fields like the education sector which administrated mutually by the center and the states.

The implementation of the neoliberal policy overlooked the necessary regulations that were prerequisite to stimulating the principles of economic growth. Monopoly and corruption was a trademark of the privatization program in Sudan. The Higher education revolution in 1990 characterized with a sharp decrease in public spending and a proliferation of public and private educational institutions. This was translated into the national development plan, especially in the education sector. Many underfunded university institutions, both state-owned and private ones, lacked sufficient facilities and direction. As a result, the education system was fragmented and lost ties with National Development Plans. Meanwhile, the imposition of Arabic language as a medium of instruction in the North was uncontested reality. Even in English textbooks, the pervasiveness of the Arab Islamic culture was salient, wherein the contents underlie the ideology of Islamization and Arabic culture (Breidlid, 2005).

During and after 1980s, the education service was riddled by a set of myriad challenges such as limited and lack of alignment between the educational goals and resources allocated, which significantly impeded the educational development in the country. Also, education policies in Sudan were orchestrated solely, nearly throughout the post-independence and modern era, by the Northerners' elites; the colonized elites, to impose their cultural and religious orientation. The Northerners' elites used the educational establishments as normalizing institutions to promulgate a specific set of norms and values in a way that relegates the cultures and the values of other ethnicities in Sudan. The Southern people, on the other hand, resisted the imposition of the Northern ideologies since 1955 until 2005 when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) was officially signed in Kenya in 2005. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement has given the Sudan People Liberation Movement (SPLM) a government and administrative autonomy for a transitional period of six years that resulted in the independence of South Sudan in 2011.

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