

‘Not yet *Uhuru*’: Interpreting the Education System in Post-Independence South Sudan

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Abstract

South Sudan's independence in July 2011 came with a euphoric promise to break with the Sudan's cultural domination, epitomised by the latter's education system. Yet, despite the introduction of the national curriculum, South Sudan, as a part of the modern Sudan for decades, is struggling to rid itself of the colonial education system. This article examines the persistence of foreign education in post-independence South Sudan. The complexities of the foreign education are intertwined with the concurrent political and economic upheavals that have bedevilled the world's youngest nation. The national curriculum is encumbered by government underfunding of education-associated with a poorly performing economy exacerbated by conflict. Underinvestment in education has wider implications for the provision of learning resources and teacher training. South Sudan's continuous reliance on foreign schooling curricula implies that its education system is not yet 'free' and independent. Most importantly, in the context of the renewed conflict, the lack of the national curriculum is critical for South Sudan's nation-building agenda. The evidence in this article has implications for improving educational policy and practice in South Sudan and other similar post-conflict African countries.

Keywords: South Sudan, Sudan, East Africa, education, national curriculum

1. Introduction

In 2016, 22,188 students took the South Sudan Certificate of Secondary Education (SSCSE) examinations. 13,973 of the SSCSE's candidates, approximately 63% of the finalists, sat the Sudan secondary school curriculum-based examinations (Ministry of Education and Instruction, 2016). The rest took the South Sudanese examinations. South Sudan attained its independence from the Sudan on July 9, 2011, but there are many state schools that teach foreign curricula, especially Sudanese, Ugandan and Kenyan ones (MoEST, 2016; Skårås & Breidlid, 2016; Novelli et al., 2016). The existence of the foreign-based curricula, primarily colonial one, in the country, is reminisced of Kenya's political situation of the 1960s, encapsulated by Oginga Odinga (1967), the Kenyan nationalist leader, in his autobiography-*Not yet Uhuru*. *Uhuru* is a Swahili word with Arabic root *Huria* which means freedom or independence. The dominance of foreign curricula schools, after many years of self-rule and independence and introduction of the national curriculum, indicates that South Sudan is politically independent, but is not yet so in terms of education.

This situation is untenable for educational authorities. In May 2016, the Minister of Education issued an order barring teaching of Sudanese curriculum in secondary schools. The declaration troubled some students, parents and teachers in affected schools across the country. The Transitional National Legislative Assembly (TNLA), the national parliament, intervened to arbitrate a compromise. The schools were permitted to teach the Sudanese curriculum for one more academic year in order to *finally* phase-out the foreign curriculum. Both politicians and educational authorities agreed that no more Sudanese curriculum would be taught in government schools, henceforth (Mading Nyok, Int. 16.02.2017; Zakaria Matur Makuer, Majur Babuor Ajal, Int 16.02.2017). However, members of the parliament were not optimistic, because similar timelines to phase-out the Sudanese curriculum was declared before specifically in 2013 and 2015 respectively (Skårås and Breidlid, 2016), proved difficult to fulfil. This suggests that there is no guarantee that the Sudanese curriculum would not be taught in schools in the future.

The main purpose of this article is to examine the continuance of foreign education in South Sudan. Although South Sudan's political cataclysm has attracted attention, less is known about its educational system. The analysis herein provides significant lessons for educational practitioners, policy makers and development partners to direct their efforts in South Sudan and other post-conflict contexts. In this respect, the article attempts to contribute to the World Journal of Education's endeavours towards creating a global understanding of education.

The article draws on official documents, statistical data and qualitative interviews with stakeholders, including some parents, officials in the Ministry of Education and parliamentarians. First, the paper traces the history of foreign education (i.e. the Sudanese Arabisation and Islamisation of education) in South (ern) Sudan. This is to contextualise the persistence of Sudanese education in South Sudan. The article also discusses South Sudanese response to northern Sudanese educational hegemony as represented in various attempts to institute a separate curriculum in the South. It particularly highlights the Government of Southern Sudan's (GoSS) introduction of the national curriculum in 2006.

The second section of the article identifies three factors that subvert the implementation of the national curriculum. It is suggested that the continuation of foreign schooling systems in South Sudan is primarily entwined with the present national crisis that gripped the country. Since independence South Sudan has been beleaguered by political and economic instability with serious repercussions for education. The predominance of foreign education is an aspect of socio-economic precariousness, which undermined the government's ability to fund education. The volatile oil based-economy frustrates educational authorities to effectively implement the national curriculum across the country; print textbooks and train teachers. Consequently, many schools in South Sudan teach foreign curricula, mainly Sudanese and East African ones. The persistence of the foreign education in the country suggests that colonial educational legacy have an enduring impact. The article argues that the educational situation undercuts the government's efforts for nation or state building process imperative in an ethnically diverse country like South Sudan.

2. Historical Background

Islamisation and Arabisation of South (ern) Sudan has been North Sudan's preoccupation. British colonialism, through the passage of the *Closed Districts Ordinance* of the 1920s, restricted the northern Sudan's Islamic and cultural influence in the South. Until the late 1940s the law proscribed Islamic proselytisation in the South and required Northern Sudanese Muslims to seek permission from the British government to travel or work in the South (Holt and Daly, 2000; Robertson, 1974; Beshir, 1968). However, the new British Southern policy of 1946 steadily removed these restrictions and the independence of the country in January 1956 paved the way for the northern Sudan's Arabisation and Islamisation of the South.

2.1 Arabisation and Islamisation of Education in South (ern) Sudan

Characteristically, Arabisation and Islamisation of education was the nexus of the Sudan's system of education in South Sudan. Cognisant about the sociological functions of education as a "secondary form of socialisation" (Burgess and Parker, 1999), successive Sudanese governments employed education ostensibly to foster a cohesive 'national' identity. The homogenisation of education was underlined by a heavy-laden pan-Arab and Islamic curriculum. Khartoum's educational strategies to Arabise and Islamise South Sudan were perpetuated in three discernible stages.

First, in February 1957 the civilian Sudanese government nationalised schools in the Southern Sudan and Arabic speaking teachers were transferred in large numbers to teach in the South (Beshir, 1968, p.74; Sanderson & Sanderson., 1981; du Toit, 2014, pp: 350-51). Building of *Khalwas* (i.e. Qur'anic schools) in the South was encouraged and some boys who failed to find places in the few government schools, enrolled in them. These boys converted to Islam and adopted Arab names. Also, General Ibrahim Abboud's military regime in 1959 meticulously persisted the Arabisation and Islamisation of education policy of his predecessors, in the belief that it would lead to 'national unity' (Beshir, 1968, p.74). He 'integrated' missionary schools within the education system and Arabic language replaced English as medium of instruction in all schools. Moreover, Friday was declared as the day of rest instead of Sunday throughout the South. More importantly, to aid the success of this programme the government decreed the Foreign Missionaries Act in 1962 and expelled the Christian missionaries from the Southern Sudan in 1964. The expulsion of the Missionaries was closely followed by the expansion of Islamic Institutes (intermediate schools) known by their Arabic name *Ma'ahid* (singular *Mahad*) in major towns in the Southern Sudan. The *Ma'ahid* compulsorily taught Islamic religion and Arabic language.

Second, the Nimeiri's regime, which took power in May 1969, assumed pan-Arabist characteristics. Sudan as a member of the Arab League and its Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (ALESCO), hurriedly revised the entire curriculum and launched it in 1970/1971 academic year (Osman, 1981). Dr Mahi el Din Sabir, an ardent pan-Arabist academic and the junta's Minister of Education, oversaw the realisation of the new curriculum. Most fundamentally, he restructured the general educational system inherited from the British from 4-4-4 to 6-3-3 system. To model it on the Egyptian and the larger Arab world systems of education, the May regime educationists altered the British educational ladder from four years each for elementary, intermediate and secondary. They changed it to six years for primary education and three years each for junior and senior secondary schooling respectively. Arabic was made a compulsory subject and more crucially it replaced English as the medium of instruction in schools. History and Geography of the Arab world and Middle East were given primacy in the curriculum. In the syllabi, there was little or no reference to South Sudan or Africa.

In fact, the Arabisation of education was so overwhelming that it undermined particular educational considerations for the Southern Sudan in the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972. The accord reached between the Sudanese government and the Southern Sudan Liberation Movement (SSLM) ending 17 years of conflict made English the official language in the Southern Region, and hence the medium of instruction in schools. However, the availability of textbooks and syllabi in Arabic and their paucity in English adversely encouraged the Arabisation of education in the Southern Sudan. Many Arabic pattern schools were opened. Special Arabic language and special Islamic religion, subjects offered at elementary level, were especially designed to lure South Sudanese students to take them for their Sudan School certificate examinations in the 1970s. It is interesting to note that these subjects survived all the curricula changes in South Sudan until today. Thus, President Nimeiri's government alignment of the Sudanese system of education with the pan-Arabism model, further entrenched the Arabisation of South Sudan.

Moreover, the ascent of the Islamist regime in the form of the National Islamic Front (NIF) to power in Khartoum in June 1989 witnessed further drive for Islamisation and Arabisation process of education in the Sudan. Unlike the previous North Sudan's assimilation schema, NIF's plan was profoundly comprehensive-was an integral part of the government's so-called *civilising mission of Islamisation*-to establish an Islamic puritan society in the Sudan (Holt and Daly, 2000, p.191). The Islamists in their civilising doctrine enveloped features of society hitherto touched. Education, for example, was reoriented consistently with this programme to 'reshape the society character in Islamic mode' (Sommers, 2005; Chol, 1999).

In order to implement the new programme, the education system was compacted from 6-3-3 to 8-3. Whereas secondary education was left unchanged, the NIF educationists combined primary and intermediate education into eight years instead of nine. Educational syllabi from primary to university in key subjects from social to hard sciences were reviewed in accordance with the new Islamic doctrine (Chol, 1999). For example, the Darwinian evolution theory, because of its intrinsic incongruity with the Islamic creed of creation, was omitted in biology textbooks. University professors who insisted to teaching it were apprehended (Africa Watch, 1992, p.5). Notwithstanding defiance from the Sudan Medical Council and the tertiary institutions, medical schools were instructed to discontinue using human corpses in their teaching of anatomy and physiology courses. Hippocratic Oath for young doctors was also proscribed.

However, if the accomplishment of NIF's vision of a theocratic Islamic state in the Sudan was complicated scientifically, they sought to realise it through extensive educational reforms and change in the syllabi of social sciences. First, senior educational positions in the Southern Sudan were exclusively retained for Muslims who were directed to promote Islamic religion in schools. Additional funds were found for the Islamisation programme (Chol, 1999, p.71). Use of English as medium of instruction was prohibited. Instead, Arabic language and Islamic religion were made compulsory subjects to be taught at all levels of education from primary to university (Forojalla, 1992).

Islamic thought saturated all subjects, including English. An analysis of syllabi content in 1996/97 from primary 1 to third year secondary school found that Islamic content of Arabic and History syllabi varied from 30% to 100% (Chol, 1999, p. 66). Modification of the syllabi of social sciences, especially the history of Sudan, was another core component of Islamisation of education. For example, new history textbooks produced in 1991/92 (Chol, 1999, p.64) thoroughly altered the history syllabi from the *Coming of the Arabs to the Sudan* to the *Coming of the People to the Sudan*. In the new syllabi the Islamists' appear not to dispute the incontrovertible historical evidence (Hassan, 1967; Holt and Daly, 2000) that the Arabs migrated, with the advent of Islam, via Egypt and across the Red Sea, to the Sudan in the seventh century AD. Nonetheless, they espoused to implant in the formative minds of nine and ten-year-old children that all the people in the country originated outside the modern Sudan.

Further, archaeological investigations placed the Shilluk and other Nilotic people in the vicinity of the present-day Khartoum, as their ancestral home, as early as the second millennium BC (Arkell, 1975, p.21). However, the government advanced the notion that the Luo groups such as the Anyuak, Shilluk, Nuer and Dinka, the principle ethnicities in South Sudan, originated from the shores of Lake Victoria in Central Africa and that the Western Equatoria's Azande came from the Lake Chad (Beshir, 1968:6). More significantly, the history textbooks obliquely suggest that any contrary assertion that some of these African groups and others were the earliest inhabitants of the country was not only distorted or silenced in the curriculum but would be disregarded as baseless.

2.2 *South (ern) Sudan Resistance to Arabisation and Islamisation*

South Sudan challenged the Northern Sudanese cultural control channelled through education. Her desire to preserve its dignity and cultural identity against the North Sudan's cultural assimilation through education, sustained her struggle for freedom and independence for decades:

[T]he use of schools to impose a language, culture and curriculum viewed by the vast majority of South Sudanese as alien and oppressive were a source of resentment (UNESCO, 2011:3).

Thus, the idea of developing a separate curriculum for South Sudan dates back to the Regional government in the 1970s. The Regional Government provided pre-tertiary education in the Southern provinces (Albino, 2006:323-355). Some members of the Regional Assembly, the parliament, invoked the issue of the curriculum in 1976 and directed the High Executive Council (HEC), the regional cabinet, to develop a curriculum to advance the cultures of the Southern Sudan. The Regional Ministry of Education designed a curriculum for the Southern Sudan in 1983 (Avelino Anduruga Said, Int 21.02.2017). Although the curriculum was adopted in some primary schools in Equatoria, it had little effect across the Southern Region. Seismic political events (Johnson, 2003: 51-59) in the country that arose the same year namely; the abrogation of the peace agreement that led to the re-division of the Southern Region, the proclamation of the *Sharia* laws and the breakout of war interrupted its trial.

2.3 *SPLM Educational Aspirations*

A copy of the curriculum, however, found its way to the bush in the late 1980s. The 1994 Sudan People's Liberation Movement's (SPLM) First National Convention approved the creation of civil structures for the movement. The SPLM noted the Islamist *civilising mission* and the damage of its educational programme, specifically their intent to rewrite the history of the country. Through the help of UNICEF, the SPLM's Secretariat of Education reviewed the 1983 curriculum (Avelino Anduruga Said Int. 21.2.2017).

The *New Sudan* (Khalid, 1987; Johnson, 2003) curriculum, as it was then known, heavily drew from East Africa, was first mooted in 1996 (Sommers, 2005, 91). Unlike the NIF's Islamic centric education, the SPLM's curriculum was reflective of the movement's political vision of establishing a united secular new Sudan (Mading Nyok, Int. 16.02.2017) It espoused an inclusive educational system that celebrated the diversity of the country.

In 2002, UNICEF printed textbooks (Sommers, 2005, 78-79; Salter, 2016). Between 48% and 54% of primary schools in SPLM administered areas adopted the curriculum and the rest of schools used Kenyan or Ugandan curricula (Sommers, 2005, p.89; Deng, 2006, p.11).

2.4 *Post CPA - Piloting A New National Curriculum*

The comprehensive peace agreement (CPA) negotiated between the SPLM and the Khartoum's ruling National Congress Party (NCP), peacefully resolved the conflict in Sudan in 2005. The CPA led to the formation of the Government of the National Unity (GoNU) in Khartoum and GoSS in Juba. The peace ushered in by the CPA, opened up educational opportunities in the Southern Sudan for the first time in twenty years. The demand for education was considerable and GoSS struggled to meet it. The SPLM inherited a system of education that suffered from many decades of neglect. Historically, South Sudan lagged behind the rest of the Sudan in terms of socio-economic development. At the time of the Sudan's independence in 1956 only 8% of schools were built in the then three Southern provinces. The relative educational development that came as a result of peace in the 1970s was eviscerated during the war between 1983 and 2005 (de Toit, 2014).

As a result of South Sudan's longstanding stance about the Northern Sudanese educational and cultural influence, GoSS's Ministry of Education improved the curriculum and introduced it in primary schools in 2006. Secondary school syllabi were piloted in 2008 (Mading Nyok, Int 16.02.2017). The curriculum was then formally unveiled in Juba in an occasion graced by the president a few months after the independence and again in 2012. Educational authorities modelled the national curriculum on the education of highly performing OECD (Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development), countries such as Finland, South Korea, Singapore, Britain and Japan. It

aims to produce an environmentally sensible, multilingual, global citizens highly skilled manpower to rise to the challenges of the twenty first century (Deng Yai, Int. 16.02.2014 and Omot Okny Olok, Int. 6.03.2017).

The Minister of Education (Deng Yai, Int. 20.02.2017) and his senior staff (Omot Okeny Olok, Int. 06.03.2017) opined that the national curriculum has seven targets including; eradicate illiteracy, widen access and promote national cohesion and contribute to learners and national socio-economic development among others (MoEST, 2012: 2). The South Sudanese curriculum, like in East Africa, taught from primary 1 (P1) to primary 8 (P8), and secondary schools from senior 1 to senior 4, represents a major departure from the Sudanese one. Structurally, the national curriculum operated an 8-4 system of general education, that is eight years for primary school and four years for secondary education. Sudan's education system, as mentioned earlier, has an 8-3-school structure. Both countries maintain official entry age of six, but the limited number of schools in South Sudan meant that many pupils enrolled at older age.

In terms of syllabi content, the national curriculum maintained its Eastern African characteristics (Novelli, et al, 2016, p.58), causing further differences in content between the two Sudans' curricula. Unlike the Sudanese education system that attempted to deracinate the South Sudanese children from their African culture and society, the national curriculum is pedagogically rooted in localism. Some of the syllabi include peace education, life skills and environmental sustainability. Also, taking a cue from South Africa, the South Sudanese national curriculum teaches national languages (MoEST, c.2013, p18) from P1 to P3. Besides English, the official language, and Arabic, Swahili, a major East African language, and French are optional subjects in secondary schools.

Distinctions in the curricula also exist in the syllabi of several subjects such as the social studies (i.e. geography and history). For example, while the Sudanese curriculum emphasises the history of the Middle East and the Arab world, the South Sudanese curriculum gives importance to the South Sudanese history, Eastern and Western Africa histories. It also offers some topics in European and Chinese histories. The South Sudan's history syllabus changed from the Sudan's of *Coming of the People to the Sudan* to the *Coming of the Arabs in the Sudan and Its Effects*. *Its Effects* is an appendage to the 1960s history syllabus abolished by the NIF in the 1990s and it is a veiled reference to the horrendous consequences of the history of Arabs in the Sudan. However, before exploring the persistence of the foreign education in South Sudan, it is important to outline the constraints that impede the national curriculum.

3. Constraints

Three factors impede the implementation of the national curriculum. Along with the educational colonial legacy, underinvestment of education-diminishes its ability to properly fund educational resources and teacher training—considerably undercut the implementation of the national curriculum.

3.1 Underinvestment in Education

Persistence of foreign schooling systems in South Sudan should be broadly viewed within the prism of the conflict and the lethargic oil based-economy. Funding constraints aggravated by the current civil war, increasingly undermine government's educational programmes. The conflict that erupted in December 2013 exacerbated the national economic woes. South Sudan relies on oil for 98% of its income, but the oil fields exist in the Upper Nile region, the epicentre of the conflict. Hence, oil production was slashed from 490,000 barrels a day in 2011 to 130,000 in early 2017 (Hourel, 2018). The sharp reduction in the production and the ubiquitous volatility witnessed in the prices of crude oil internationally contributed to contraction of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) by 6.5 per cent in 2015. Consequently, the fragile fiscal prowess of the country had a corrosive effect on education.

Table 1. Education Spending as a Percentage of Total Annual Budget from 2011 to 2017

<i>Fiscal year</i>	<i>amount in (millions SSP) as a% of total expenditure</i>	
2010/2011	323.5	8
2011/2012	225.2	5
2012/2013	233.1	6
2013/2014	504.6	6
2014/2015	436.9	7
2015/2016	388	4
2016/2017	962.9	3.2

Source: The World Bank, 2012, p.90; Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, 2013, 2015, 2016, Ministry of Finance and Planning, 2017

As indicated in the table 1 above, public expenditure on education from 2011 to 2017 reflects the deteriorating macroeconomics in the country. Education expenditure as a percentage of the government annual budget consistently dwindled from 8% in 2011 to 3.2% in 2017. This expenditure represented approximately \$20 per annum per a pupil in 2011. Tripling of the 2016/2017's education budget to almost a billion South Sudanese pounds (SSP) masks its actual value. The devaluation of the local currency against the US dollar in December 2015, and the ruinous inflation that accompanied it drastically reduced its value in real terms. Thus, the actual per capita expenditure markedly plummeted to about \$9.1 per child in 2017. This level of funding, most of it paid as salaries to teachers, is the lowest in the region (Novelli, et al., 2016).

However, despite funding problems GoSS made education one of its key priorities. The government considerably improved primary school net enrolment ratios (NER) by 20% from 813,402 in 2012 to 1,005,362 pupils in 2015 (MoEST, 2016:23) respectively. More importantly, in terms of physical infrastructure many schools were built. For example, the number of secondary schools increased from 190 in 2012 to 245 schools in 2015 MoEST., 2016, p26: Novelli, et al., 2016). Hence, the population of secondary school students increased from 41,512 in 2012 to 58,928 students in 2015. Therefore, although South Sudan failed to achieve universal primary education, a second Millennium Development Goal (MDG), by 2015 (NBS, 2013: 34), it has, nonetheless, made significant progress in education.

These accomplishments were possible through significant support from international development partners. Since 2005, some of the major funders of education in South Sudan include UNICEF, the World Bank, USAID, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and UK's Department for International Development (DfID). Most recently the Global Partnership for Education (GPE) raised \$36.2 million to support education in South Sudan (Deng Yai, Int., 20.02.2017).

However, the cumulative funding from the government and the development partners is not enough for educational provision in the country. South Sudan, with 51% of its population under the age of eighteen, is a young country with a huge demand for education (GoSS, c.2010:47; NBS, 2013:18). Consequently, there are about 1.3 million children out of school (UNESCO, 2011, p.1). Demographic projections by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) estimate that in 2017, 6.9 million children needed education (NBS, 2016:8). Hence, combination of poor public funding and other socio-economic factors mute government's efforts to undertake vital educational tasks, such as the implementation of the national curriculum, printing of textbooks and training of teachers. Thus, poor public funding of education represents one of the greatest hindrances to the implementation of the national curriculum.

3.2 Scarce Teaching Resources

Scarce teaching resources undermine the implementation of the curriculum and indivertibly responsible for the continuation of foreign syllabi in two particular ways. First, generally, there is the paucity of textbooks in South Sudan. For instance, primary school pupil-textbook ratio for English and mathematics, universal subjects, were similar (1.7 and 1.8). This is because in 2011, DfID funded printing of 9.6 million primary school textbooks for five core subjects, English, maths, sciences, social studies and Christian Religious Education. Most recently, China printed another 1.3 million of the revised versions of the same textbooks.

However, ratios for secondary school textbooks in English and maths are higher, between seven to ten students share a book (7.3 and 9.5) (MoEST, 2016, p.69). This is mainly because few secondary school textbooks were printed (Scopas Lodiong, Int., 10.02.2017). In fact, both educators and parliamentarians are concerned that many subject syllabi have not been produced yet. For quality reasons, the educational authorities commissioned Cambridge University Press to write and print the textbooks. Although the cost of writing and illustration of the textbooks, \$3.8 million, has been met from the GPE funds, the Ministry of Education is unable to finance printing of 40 million textbooks for 2 million pupils estimated to cost around \$80 million.

In the meantime, teachers use the curriculum guidelines to plan their lessons. In history, for example, teachers improvise, interview elders, experts and consult documents i.e. CPA to plan lessons (Scopas Lodiong, Int. 10.02.2017). This form of lesson planning offers considerable latitude for teachers to innovate. But for many untrained teachers, as explained below, such flexibility could also be a recipe for indefinite consequences. It can lead to un-standardised output that presents difficulties in assessment. Hence, as admitted by some of the educational authorities, in the absence of the teaching resources, most teachers revert to foreign teaching materials (Scopas Lodiong). This attitude has inadvertently encouraged continuance of foreign curricula such as the Sudanese education in the country.

Secondly, the national curriculum is stalled by the fact that its syllabi and consequently SSCSE examinations were incomplete. For example, important subjects such as additional (pure) mathematics, English literature, fine art, computer science and Arabic language were not catered for in the national curriculum (South Sudan National Examinations Council, 2015, p.5). This weakness made universities increasingly anxious about SSCSE's meeting their entry criteria. For instance, additional maths is a prerequisite for university admission to science-based specialisations such as engineering, general science, computer science and mathematics. Students that intend to study these disciplines at the university opt to study them in the Sudan's curriculum, which readily offered them and had expertise in delivering them. This undermines faith in the national curriculum. In order to solve this problem, Dr John Gai Yoh, the former Minister of Education, recommended for the South Sudanese Examinations Council 'to adapt' them (Mading Nyok). Thus, the examination papers for these subjects were identical.

In addition, the Sudanese secondary school curriculum has some other advantages over the South Sudanese one. While the South Sudanese curriculum takes four years to complete, the Sudanese curriculum is a three-year programme. In the current economic hardships, this makes the latter more palatable and some parents prefer a shorter schooling programme. More importantly, the appeal of the Sudanese curriculum-based qualifications for university places in the Sudan might also be another factor for some parents and students to take the foreign-based curricula. For many parents the Sudanese curriculum offers their children wider opportunities for tertiary education, not only inside the country, but abroad, especially in the Sudan where 10,000 South Sudanese students enrolled for their university education.

The two Sudans' curricula were distinct not only in their content, but in the delivery approach as well. Whereas the Sudanese curriculum emphasises learning by heart consistent with the Qur'anic studies and Arabic poetry, the South Sudanese curriculum is competency-based and learner-centred. The national curriculum, according to senior educationists, seeks to impart knowledge and skills through creative, analytical thinking, experimentation and learning through discovery (Yai, Nyok and Omot). This mode of learning is resource-intensive. It was suggested by a senior official in the Ministry of Education, that the curriculum is hard to deliver without resources: 'If you don't equip the teacher, it [i.e. the curriculum] will mean nothing (Omot). This indicates that scarcity of learning resources, especially provision for laboratory equipment, and trained lab technicians make it harder for teachers to deliver the national curriculum. South Sudan's educational authorities blamed teachers' culture and apathy as responsible for poor implementation of the national curriculum, but scarcity of textbooks is a major problem.

3.3 Poor Teacher Training

Officials in the Ministry of Education recognised that teacher training was crucial to the success of the national curriculum (Deng Yai, Int, 16.02.2014). After the inception of GoSS, it was realised that teacher training was a key educational priority. In 2009, only 3% of the 28,000 teachers in South Sudan were university graduates. A World Bank report in 2012 found that the subject-content knowledge of primary school teachers was weak and that almost half of them (46%) were primary school leavers and less than half (45%) were secondary school leavers (Yai, Int. 16.02.2014). The Ministry of Education developed national teacher education strategy to cover both in-service and pre-service training in the various training institutes. It attempted to deal with the issue of the low-levels of the academic qualifications and introduced the Fast-Track Training Programme (FTTP) (World Bank, 2012: 115-116). The large size of teachers that required training suggests that the problem is extremely difficult. In 2015, there were 37,792 primary school teachers, most of them untrained.

With respect to secondary schools it was suggested that in 2015, 64.1% of the 3,273 teachers (MoEST, 2016, p.85) were reportedly trained. However, we must be slightly cautious because training here is synonymous with teacher-qualifications. 1,593 (56.2%) (MoEST, 2016, p.86) out of total number of secondary school teachers possessed university certificates. However, possession of a university degree or diploma is a prerequisite for secondary school teachers, but it does not mean they were professionally trained. Thus, some of the GPE funds were earmarked for the training of school inspectors to improve school leadership and governance and teacher training specifically to support numeracy and literacy in primary schools (Yai, Int.20.02.2017). Despite the lack of trained teachers, especially science ones, the educational authorities were determined to commence the new syllabi in 2013 by recruiting teachers from East Africa. This measure was shelved as a result of the austerity measures imposed by the drastic reduction in national revenue. Subsequently, shortage in textbooks and trained manpower impaired delivery of the national curriculum and explains the persistence of the Sudanese curriculum. For instance, lack of qualified teachers meant that Arabic and French were the only foreign languages taught in secondary schools. Swahili is not taught in many schools. Environment is taught, without its sustainability component, as an adjunct to geography.

Moreover, the unsystematic introduction of the curriculum and the feeble training of teachers-imposed problems for its implementation. Several training of trainees (ToT) cycles were conducted in May 2016 and January 2017. The training involved 42 teachers (14 primary school and 28 secondary school) representing seven primary and seven secondary schools in the former greater seven states of Bahr el Ghazal and Equatoria. The training covered units in Maths for P1, P3 and P7 respectively. For the secondary schools, the teachers were trained in teaching of units in Physics and Geography (Olok). The pilots were successful and recommended the implementation of the curriculum nationwide (Yai, Olok). The ToT trainees represented 0.00102% of the entire teaching force, were expected to return to their schools and train their colleagues. But because many of the trainees were Arabic pattern, they were able to absorb very little to impart to their colleagues (Akuei Dut, Int. 10.02.2017).

Additionally, the piloting of the national curriculum itself was not conducted methodically and this stifled its implementation. Unlike the previous curricula changes, the national curriculum was not laid out across the country at the same time. Take General Abboud's curriculum, for example, it was meticulously introduced to first year primary school only in 1959 and senior classes were exempted. Thus, the English system of education steadily continued until 1968 when it was finally phase out. The national curriculum was introduced, piloted, launched and re-launched at different times at different states, at different schools at different levels. For example, many schools in Equatoria than Upper Nile and Bahr el Ghazal taught the national curriculum prior to the CPA, and in 2006, 2011, and 2016 respectively. Because of the on-going conflict that gripped the country, the latest re-launch of the curriculum eschewed Upper Nile. The region's three former states had 57 secondary schools or 23.6% of all secondary schools in the country. This vast space left unaffected by the national curriculum continuous to be occupied by the Sudan's schooling system.

The outcome of the disconcerted curriculum's approach is the muddled situation where schools in one town deliver different curricula. Therefore, although the majority of the primary schools taught the national curriculum it seems that a significant proportion of primary schools might be actually teaching the Sudanese curriculum. This is particularly true with the schools in Upper Nile that were not covered by the pilot. When these students passed to secondary schools they then opt for the three-year Sudanese curriculum instead of a four-year South Sudanese one.

3.4 'Not yet Uhuru' - the Persistence of Foreign Systems of Education

When the SPLM took over the reign of the Southern Sudan in 2005, the majority of schools taught the Sudanese curriculum, but there were also other foreign-based curricula schools, primarily Kenyan and Ugandan. By 2012, over 30% of schools in South Sudan were teaching Kenyan curriculum (MoEST, 2016). In 2015, secondary schools that taught the Sudanese curriculum accounted for 12.1% (MoEST, 2016). However, the percentage of schools that taught the foreign curricula in 2015 appears to have been undercounted. The war made a sizable number of schools unreachable.

Table 2. Number of Secondary School Students in final Grades by States in 2012 and 2015

	2012		2015	
	Senior 3	Senior 4	Senior 3	Senior 4
Central Equatoria	4,503	1,223	5,415	4,833
Eastern Equatoria	1,150	570	1,366	945
Jonglei	156	-	?	?
Lakes	812	492	475	210
N. Bahr el Ghazal	650	117	1,351	253
Upper Nile	2,417	41	?	?
Unity	920	-	?	?
Warrap	766	3	1,212	253
W. Bahr el Ghazal	1,200	191	1,968	179
Western Equatoria	714	455	1,172	673

Source: MoEST, 2013, p.67; MoEST, 2016, p.78.

However, the problem could be more complicated. Members of TNLA's Education Committee in their routine school inspections in 2016 found some schools in Gudele, a precinct of Juba, the national capital, offering South Sudanese curriculum by day and Sudanese curriculum in the evening. The students registered for Sudanese curriculum were private and hence paid tuition fees. In the current dire economic situation this represents an essential incentive for teachers to augment their meagre pay. It was not surprising that the MPs' enquires revealed

pervasiveness of the phenomenon. Consistent with last year's figures in March 2017, there were 19,484 candidates that took the SSCSE exams. 11,046 and 7,338 candidates registered for Sudan and South Sudan based SSCSE's examinations respectively (Livingstone, 2017: 3). 62.66% of candidates opted for the Sudanese curriculum examination, which indicates prevalence of the Sudanese curriculum in South Sudan.

Table 2 above, compares the number of students in secondary's senior 3 and senior 4 in the former greater ten states of South Sudan in 2012 and 2015. The table is missing data from Upper Nile, Jonglei and Unity in 2015. Due to the current conflict, the Ministry of Education was unable to collect data from these states in 2015 and 2016 respectively. Thus, the question mark (?) in the table indicates that there was no data collected that year and the dash (-) denotes that no students enrolled for the grades in that particular year.

Overall, the data show that in both academic years the number of students in senior 4, the final year of the national curriculum, is significantly lower in comparison to the students in senior 3, the final year of the Sudanese based curriculum. It is probable that some students in senior 3 might not have performed satisfactorily in their examinations and hence were not promoted to senior 4. However, the only feasible explanation for the significant differences in the two grades, which is persistently borne by the number of candidates of the SSCSE examination, is that the majority of students opt to end their secondary school education in senior 3. They sit the Sudanese SSCSE based examinations instead of progressing to senior 4. In other words, the schools where these students are enrolled offer the Sudanese curriculum.

The statistical data also highlight some disparity suggesting dominance of the Sudan's education in some parts of the country than others. The data show that there were more students in senior 3 in states neighbouring the Sudan than in Equatoria. Many of senior 3 students were found in Bahr el Ghazal (i.e. Lakes, Warrap, Northern and Western Bahr el Ghazal) and Upper Nile (i.e. Upper Nile, Unity and Jonglei). The national curriculum was relatively taught in secondary schools in the former Central and Eastern Equatoria states. For example, in Central Equatoria, in 2012 there were 4,503 students in senior 3 and 1,223 in senior 4. In 2015, the sizes of the two grades in Central Equatoria were comparable at 5,415 and 4,833 respectively.

Equatoria's relative receptivity of the national curriculum and the opposite in the other two regions could be explained by the fact that many of the former's schools used English as the medium of instruction since the 1970s. Moreover, many more schools in Equatoria region pioneered the *New Sudan* curriculum in the late 1990s. In contrast, fewer schools in Upper Nile and Bahr el Ghazal taught the SPLM curriculum. In terms of teaching resources, Equatoria's proximity to the national capital and relative acceptance of the national curriculum encouraged the educational authorities to support its schools, than schools in remote Upper Nile and Bahr el Ghazal (Novelli, et al., p.58). The case in point is that in 2012, similar percentages of students were in year 3 in the Central Equatoria, and Northern and Western Bahr el Ghazal and Upper Nile, taught the Sudanese curriculum (Nyok). However, as the figures in table 2, above, show most students (4,833) in the Central Equatoria switched to the national curriculum in 2015.

Furthermore, the data shows that the delivery of the national curriculum outside Equatoria was problematic. In 2012 Upper Nile state had 2,417 students in senior 3, and 141 in senior 4 respectively and in 2015 no data was collected because of the war, but figures for the examinations in 2016 and 2017 indicate that an overwhelming number of students from the region took the Sudan's version of the SSCSE. Data from Warrap, Northern Bahr el Ghazal and Western Bahr el Ghazal states follow the same pattern. The data trends suggest a profound Northern Sudanese educational influence in the neighbouring South Sudan's states and a declining influence in schools in Equatoria's (particularly in Central and Eastern Equatoria).

Analysis of the introduction of the national curriculum indicates that persistence of the Sudanese curriculum in South Sudan may be partly explained by perception and attitude of parents and teachers. Educational authorities blame the teachers for being 'comfortable' with the Sudanese curriculum and fear the new curriculum delivered in English, medium many teachers outside Equatoria were unaccustomed to. But actually, some parents and teachers argued that the Sudanese curriculum is of higher standard, especially in mathematics and sciences, in relation to the national and East African curricula (Nyok).

Therefore, the continuous ascendancy of foreign education curricula, particularly the Sudanese one, is a direct outcome of the Sudanese historical educational legacy in South Sudan. For almost a century (i.e. from 1898 to 2011) South Sudan was conditioned to the Sudanese system of education. Hence, although politicians and educational authorities sought a break with it, it was not easy to do so. Most teachers and parents were products of the Sudanese system of education and are strange to the new curriculum. Although figures are unavailable, it is important to note that GoSS inherited the preponderance of the current teaching force from the Sudan. A sizable number of the

teachers that taught in schools in the SPLM liberated areas, during the liberation struggle, were essentially SPLA (i.e. Sudan People's Liberation Army) combatants. After the CPA, the majority of these teachers left teaching for the army. Employment conditions in the SPLA were considerably better than in education. For example, a basic pay for a primary school teacher was 283 SSP and a private in the army received thrice that amount. Most of these teachers were used to teaching the Sudanese syllabus and Arabic as the medium of instruction. Alas, the implementation of the national curriculum did not address the issue of the shift from Arabic to English.

Furthermore, the national curriculum's intrinsic complex objectives risk undermining its realisation. Obviously, producing a multi-skilled workforce for a globalised twenty first century is desirable. However, given the young nation's motley impediments this represents an implausible postulation. One would expect the educational authorities to concentrate their limited prowess attending to the colossal problem of attaining a universal primary education. Such a strategy should address core capacity issues such as pupils' enrolment and retention, and teacher training.

Equally, the national curriculum appears to be very ambitious not only in its vision and objectives, but in its conceptualisation too. To aspire to the level of the advanced European and Asian countries is appealing. But, principles of cultural borrowing provide that it is best conducted between comparable contexts. The contexts and experiences that shape the educational objectives of many OECD countries are less pertinent to South Sudan. Rwanda, a landlocked and post-conflict African country, is the best model for South Sudan. The East African nation is effectively emerging from a similar tragic devastating ethnic internecine that claimed a million of its citizenry and traumatized the social and ethnic fabric of the society. More importantly, Rwanda, like South Sudan, has similar population size, demographic characteristics, and identical socio-economic indices.

Educationally, like South Sudan, which is changing its own medium of instruction from Arabic to English, Rwanda is also managing a challenging language transition from French to English. Rwanda, like South Sudan, heavily relies on funding from development partners. But, unlike South Sudan, she spends more of its income on education. Hence, it has attained an impressive NER of 96.6% of primary education, which makes it one of the few countries in Africa to achieve universal primary and gender parity, i.e. second and third MDGs respectively. This achievement has spurred Rwanda to focus on the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in education (Bickmore, 2008; Ministry of Education, 2013).

In fact, there is a lot Rwanda, more than any of the OECD countries, can offer South Sudan to contextualise its education in its cultural heritage and experience. Rwanda has effectively used education to promote national cohesion:

Since the cessation of escalated violence Rwanda's government and educators have sought to promote national unity and reconciliation through eliminating the most egregious elements of pre-1994 curriculum. As of 2003, it has been illegal to classify students ethnically as Hutu, Tutsi, or Twa (Bickmore, 2008: 258).

Rwanda's nation-building education experience has resonance to South Sudan, a country deemed to be a configuration of tribes with little in common. It follows that failure to implement the national curriculum could have serious consequence on its nation building agenda. The renewed conflict and the intractable rampant inter-tribal violence that characterized South Sudan suggest that the social divisiveness is deep in the country. In this context, education and national curriculum in particular, has a significant role in fostering and constructing a South Sudanese national identity. Teaching of foreign curricula or the existence of 'separate parallel school systems (Bickmore, 2008: 258)' poses problems for the nation building educational programme.

4. Conclusion

South Sudan resisted Sudan's educational policies of Arabisation and Islamisation for decades. For many South Sudanese the freedom to promote their cultural identity was the *raison d'être* for her political struggle (Chol, 1999). She coveted her own educational system to promote her African culture and history. The opportunity arose with the *New Sudan* curriculum and the inception of GoSS. However, budgetary constraints and the spiralling conflict side-tracked the government from focusing on tackling underlying educational capacity issues.

Oginga Odinga did not discuss education *per se* in his memoirs. Nonetheless, he referred to it within his general exposition of *Uhuru*. He was unequivocal that *Uhuru* should: 'give the children more schools' (Odinga, 1967: 314). This perspective underscores the significance of *Uhuru* for education; country that is incapable to offer education to its populace is not *fully* independent. Although South Sudan seeks to develop a distinct education system that imbues her cultural heritage and history, in reality, the extant curriculum taught in most of its secondary schools is foreign. It

is a mishmash of the Sudanese curriculum as in the 'adapted' subjects and the East African one.

Therefore, South Sudan's independence, like Kenya more than half a century ago, in terms of its education, it is not yet *Uhuru*. In the context of the renewed conflict, which has assumed an ethnic characteristic, a national curriculum that emphasises nation building should have had precedence for the country. The evidence in this article has implications for improving educational policy and practice in South Sudan and offers salient lessons for similar post-conflict African countries.

Interviews

Akuei Dut, parent of secondary school children in schools in Aweil, former Northern Bahr el Ghazal, February 10, 2017, Juba.

Avelino Andurga Siad, Director General of Planning, Ministry of Education, February 21, 2017, Juba.

Deng Yai, while Undersecretary, MoEST, February 16, 2014, Juba.

Deng Yai, Minister of Education, February 20, 2017, Juba.

Mading Nyok, Secretary for Secondary Examinations, South Sudan Examination Council, February 16, 2017, Juba.

Majur Babuor Ajal, Chairperson of Education Committee, TNLA, February 16, 2017, Juba.

Omot Okony Olok, Director General, Quality Assurance and Innovation, the Ministry of Education, March 6, 2017, Juba.

Placido Wani, member his children's school Parents-Teacher Association (PTA), February 22, 2017, Juba.

Scopas Lodiong, Director for Curriculum, Ministry of Education, a former science (chemistry) secondary school teacher, February 10, 2017, Juba.

Zakaria Matur Makuer, Member of the TNLA's Education Committee, Majur Babuor Ajal, Chairperson of Education Committee, TNLA, February 16, 2017, Juba.

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