

## Language Policy and Students' Protests: The Case of Southern Sudan, 1960–2005

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### ABSTRACT

*This article is based on Richard Ruiz's language orientations and the constitution of UNESCO. The central objective of this article is to examine the role played language to escalate conflict and confrontations in the mainland of Sudan. In addition to existing literature on the issue, the study also relied on primary data and interviewed people who participated in those protests. One of the major findings of this study is the policy to use Arabic as a language of instruction in schools. The argument was that Arabic could bring about national unity. This policy was opposed in schools in Southern Sudan through students' protests. The people in the South thought Arabic language was a disregard for their rich cultures, values, and beliefs. South Sudanese argued that Arabic was not indigenous to them and its use was going to result in poor performance in school examinations. In a way, these protests coupled with civil wars contributed to the secession of South Sudan.*

### INTRODUCTION

This article reviews language policies in Sudan between 1960 and 2005 although language and religion were intertwined.<sup>1</sup> Language and ethnicity are social constructs distinguishing one group from another and the medium through which identity can be addressed.<sup>2</sup> Language planners must be aware of the social, historical, economic, cultural, and political differences present. Planning must be aware of the rights of the people concerned – mass loyalty, acceptance, mutual use, value, and cultural tradition. In a way, students' protests against language policies of the successive Sudan governments contributed to the secession of South Sudan. Students' protests aimed at triggering off social, economic, and political change are not unique to Sudan. One of the most famous students' protests against the language of instruction policy that caught the whole world was perhaps the June 16, 1976 uprising in Soweto, South Africa. An estimated 10,000 Black students marched to Orland stadium to protest against the introduction of African language in black schools, they were met by riot police who used teargas and live bullets leaving between 400 and 700 dead.<sup>3</sup> It resulted in nationwide mobilization and worldwide revulsion.

Medieval Muslim geographers gave the name of *Bilad al-Sudan* 'the land of black people' and in its restricted sense, the term now refers to the then Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, later Sudan. It was a vast area with varied peoples. Before the secession of the Republic of South Sudan, it was estimated to be one million square miles.<sup>4</sup> According to Oduho and Deng<sup>5</sup>, the January 18, 1958 population census of Sudan racial profile was Arabs 39%, Southerners 30%, Westerners 13%, Nubians 3%, Beja 6%, Nuba 6%, and others 3%. In sum, the people who referred to themselves as Arabs were 39% of the total population.

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<sup>1</sup> A lot has happened since 2005 including the secession of Southern Sudan from Sudan on July 9, 2011. This essay will refer to Southern Sudan when it was part of Sudan.

<sup>2</sup> Hayati, A. Majid & Mashhadi, Amir (2010). Language planning and language-in-education policy in Iran, *Language Problems and Language Planning*, 34 (1). Pp. 24–42.

<sup>3</sup> McKenna, Amy (2016). *The Soweto Uprising*. Available at <https://www.britannica.com/story/the-soweto-uprising>. Accessed on April 16, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Holt, P.M. (1961). *A Modern History of the Sudan: from the Funj Sultanate to the present day*. London: Grove Press.

<sup>5</sup> Oduho, J. & Deng, W. (1963). *The Problem of Southern Sudan*. London. Oxford University Press.

They are divided into artificial congregations – the Arabized Nubians and Ja’aliyyin and Juhayana nomads.<sup>6</sup> Although few in number, the Arabs became the dominant group after the independence of Sudan on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January, 1956.

With the defeat of Mahdia and the occupation of Southern Sudan, Anglo-Egyptians started the establishment of a condominium rule in Sudan. This involved, among others, provision of services such as formal schooling. Central to formal education is the language of instruction. The paper is problematized on two orientations in language planning<sup>7</sup>: Language as a problem: a strong assimilationist goal occurs on the societal–political level and more powerful group, even if it is less in population, it is able to force its language on the less powerful and language as a personal, human and legal or constitutional rights. The area of contention is that the powerful Northern Sudanese who inherited power from the departing British wanted to impose their language and culture on majority of the Sudanese people. On their side, Southern Sudan wanted to learn in their local languages because it is their cultural and human right. They also supported English language because it did not belong to any ethnic or cultural group in Sudan. These orientations are partially based on the constitution of UNESCO as adopted in London on November 16, 1945, at the Conference of Allied Ministers of Education (CAME) whose article 1 states its purpose as a contribution to peace and security by promoting collaboration among nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, rule of law and for human rights and fundamental freedom which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion.<sup>8</sup> Data for this article was collected through the review of secondary sources, archival materials, and interviews with the people who participated in those protests.

#### BRITISH POLICIES IN THE SUDAN

During the battle of Omdurman resulting in the defeat of Mahdism, 11,000 of Mahdi’s 52,000 strong force was slaughtered in a single battle against the Anglo-Egyptian 49 dead. This defeat did not bring an end to problems in Sudan.<sup>9</sup> Mopping-up operations had to continue against Calipha Abdullah as many Mahdist believed in the divine cult of the Mahdi.<sup>10</sup> Although they did not wage a unified front against the Anglo-Egyptian occupation of their region, Southern Sudanese did not sit idly by and see their country occupied. There were scattered primary resistances while the Anglo-Egyptians organized themselves on how to administer Sudan. A new colony whose economy was in chaos, the population had declined due to wars, diseases, and famine. Traditional institutions were weakened or had vanished.<sup>11</sup>

Initial funds for the administration came from the Egyptian treasury in 1913.<sup>12</sup> With limited resources, the money could not be extended beyond defending government posts and putting down uprisings.<sup>13</sup> Formal

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<sup>6</sup> Collins, Robert (2008). *A History of Modern Sudan*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>7</sup> Hult, Francis M. (2016). Revisiting Orientations in Language Planning: Problem, Right, and Resource as an Analytical Heuristic, *The Bilingual Review/La Revista Bilingüe*, 33 (3). Pp. 30–49.

<sup>8</sup> UNESCO (1945). *Constitution of the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization*. London: UNESCO.

<sup>9</sup> Nelson, Harold D. (1982). *Sudan: A Country Study*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition. Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office.

<sup>10</sup> Cecil, Jackson H. (1955). *Behind the Modern Sudan*, 1<sup>st</sup> edition. London: Macmillan.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>12</sup> Daly, M.W. & Holt, P.M. (2011). *A History of the Sudan: From the Coming of Islam to the Present*, 6<sup>th</sup> edition. Harlow: Longman.

<sup>13</sup> Abdel-Rahim, Muddathir (1969). *Imperialism and nationalism in the Sudan: A study in constitutional and political development, 1899–195*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

education programs started in 1900.<sup>14</sup> Christian Missionaries including the Austrian Government assailed Cromer, British colonial administrator in Egypt, to allow Christian missionaries to proselytize fanatic Muslims but all he allowed them to build were schools and an Anglican Cathedral in Khartoum.<sup>15</sup> In the North, one of Cromer's aims for the establishment of schools was for exercising the fanatical spirit which was such a serious menace to peace and order, it seemed that education would prove the best weapon.<sup>16</sup> While in the south, the missionaries were to teach elements of common-sense, good behavior, and obedience to government authority.<sup>17</sup>

In Southern Sudan, each Missionary society was given a free hand and having its zone of influence to proselytize.<sup>18</sup> The American Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, and the Anglican bodies were given spheres of influence in the South in which they could operate.<sup>19</sup> There were no Muslim missionaries. Besides, the grand aims of schools were to train personnel for local recruitment for government services such as technical and agricultural knowledge, which would have an important effect on economic progress. No organized Islamic missionaries existed and nobody was granting a sphere to. The educational plans for both Southern and Northern Sudan were for winning the confidence of the people in the government.

The nationalistic sentiments in Egypt that started in 1919 resulting in riots in Egypt and Sudan and the killing of the Anglo-Egyptian Governor-General of Sudan on November 19, 1924, made the British Government become an interventionist in Sudan.<sup>20</sup> The indirect rule became the norm. Traditional leaders and Sheikhs became recognized authorities. In the South, the government began to subsidize missionary schools in 1927. The Rejaf Language Conference of 1928 was held which played an important role in the Sudan language policy until the dawn of independence in 1956. It chose six regional languages for instruction in schools. They include Bari, Dinka, Nuer, Latuko, Zande, and Moru where: a) a unified orthography based on the Roman alphabet was developed, b) textbooks, primers, and supplementary readers for schools were produced, c) lexicography or revision of existing dictionaries and grammars were developed, d) vernacular teacher training institutions were established, and, e) Juba Publication Bureau was established.

Educationists in the south began to realize that the Roman alphabet and the combination of letters found in European languages were inefficient to cope with the new sounds encountered.<sup>21</sup> This development helped authorities overcome a multiplicity of spellings issues. The language groups became the latest additions to a steadily growing number of orthographies on a phonetic adopted in Africa. It was a new era in the history of language study.

Northern Sudan did not need a conference similar to that of Southern Sudan because they are Arabic speakers and its people are Arabized in culture and outlook.<sup>22</sup> The government educational scheme was drawn to give the first place in importance to elementary vernacular schools, and second to technical and

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<sup>14</sup> Lloyd, Lord (1933). *Egypt since Cromer*. London. Macmillan.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>17</sup> Duncan, J.S.R. (1952). *The Sudan: A Record of Achievement*. Edinburgh & London: William Blackwood & Sons Ltd.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>21</sup> Tucker, A. N. (1928). Report of the Rejaf Language Conference, 1928, *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 2, No. 1 (Jan., 1929), p. 95.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 4.

vocational instruction supplied from the Upper School of the Gordon College.<sup>23</sup> Vernacular elementary schools were therefore arranged as a means of spreading civilization among an agricultural population.<sup>24</sup> Also, there were institutionalized primary schools to serve as feeders to the Upper School of Gordon College and produce recruits for junior posts in government service.<sup>25</sup> The use of vernacular in elementary schools had taken into consideration the orientations of language as a problem and as a right. As part of winning Sudanese over to the government, learning in local languages as positive territorial, historical, psychological, and socio-cultural commonalities effects. In Southern Sudan, the first teachers ever to be trained were vernacular instructors.

The introduction of written languages was well received in the south. According to Taban Lo Liyong,<sup>26</sup> this was what prompted the opening of schools in Kajo Keji county of South Sudan. In 1926 Chief Busu of Limi asked for a school to be built in Kajo Keji immediately after a border meeting in his area. During the early colonialism period, there were border meetings held every three years in Kajo Keji. When this Wore<sup>27</sup> was being held at Limi, the chief of the area, Busu, saw a black man who was seated next to a white District Commissioner, he never talked but was scribing continuously. When Busu asked what he was doing, he was informed that the black man was taking minutes. He was impressed when what he said the day before could be read back to him. The secretary at the time was probably educated in the Bari language and Busu disagreed on compound consonant *gwa* and *gba*, how Bari and Kuku spelling and pronunciation of the same consonant.<sup>28</sup> This could be of the few protests regarding the differences in writing and pronouncing this compound alphabet between the Kuku and Bari. Busu asked for the school to be built in his area immediately and in 1927 Kirila was built. The same school was later transferred to Romogi and expanded to house a secondary school and a Theological College. By implication, Busu wanted the secretary to take minutes in his Kuku dialect, an indication of the popularity of indigenous languages. It also matches Richard Ruiz's orientations of language as a problem and a personal, human, and legal or constitutional rights.

#### UNITY OF SUDAN, INDEPENDENCE, AND NATIONALIZATION

Sudan was administered as two separate colonies from 1900 to 1947. The Northern part had a government-controlled education system while the policy for the south was a laissez-faire policy. The government created a new model of elementary school called Kuttab which catered for boys of 7-11, offering a 4-year program taught in Arabic.<sup>29</sup> The curriculum was made of three major subjects – Islamic religion, Arabic language, arithmetic, and seven minor ones – geography, history, hygiene, agriculture, veterinary science, object lessons, and handwork. The state gave subsidies to schools. Between 1918–1930, the number of subsidized schools in the north grew from 6 to 768 with many towns to have elementary and intermediate schools.<sup>30</sup> From 1934, districts that lacked financial means to support elementary schools were provided with subgrade schools.<sup>31</sup> Although viewed as a forerunner of full

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Interview with Taban Lo Liyong in Juba, South Sudan on April 16, 2020.

<sup>27</sup> Wore was a border meeting held every three years. It rotated among Kuku chiefs.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>29</sup> Seri-Hersch, Iris (2017). *Education in colonial Sudan, 1900-1957*. Oxford: Oxford Royal Encyclopedia, African History.

<sup>30</sup> Karar, Haytham (2019). The Implications of Socio-Politics and Political Economy on Education Policy in Sudan: 1900 to 2000, *Italian Journal of Sociology of Education*, 11 (2). Pp. 428–447.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 29.

elementary schools, these two-year schools became a permanent feature of the Sudanese educational landscape.

Like in the rest of Africa, the British adopted a laissez-faire policy to education in the South, allowing educational matters to be taken up by Christian missionaries.<sup>32</sup> Southern Sudan was divided into spheres of influence – Bahr el Ghazal province for Catholic missionaries, Mongala for British Anglicans, and Upper Nile for Presbyterians. Missionaries established village, elementary and trade schools.<sup>33</sup> From 1926 there was gradual government intervention. The curricula in missionary schools were diverse and the medium of instruction was local languages in village schools and English in elementary and intermediate schools. Mathew, the Secretary for Education and Health encouraged missionary teachers to learn native languages and cultures with a view that aimed at accommodating tribal histories in schools.<sup>34</sup>

The unification of education system began in 1947 when the idea of developing Southern Sudan into a separate country or uniting it with East Africa was abandoned. The Northern intelligentsia thought the solution to Southern question was to open new schools on the line of those in Northern and use Arabic language as the medium of instruction. In 1942, the Graduate Congress demanded the cancellation of state subsidies to a missionary school and the unification of the school curricula.<sup>35</sup> In addition to the Graduate Congress, the Sudan Administrative Conference that was convened in Khartoum in 1946 and 1947 to discuss the greater participation in the government of the country also advocated for educational unification.<sup>36</sup> Education had to be harmonized and Arabic taught in schools in the South.

The establishment of an Advisory Council for Northern Sudan in 1944 laid the foundation for the independence and the nationalization of schools. It demanded the repeal of the Closed District Ordinance and unification of the education system.<sup>37</sup> Educational homogenization started in 1948 after the change in Southern policy.<sup>38</sup> The policy of unification entailed using the Arabic language as the lingua franca. The Legislative Assembly approved the Northern and Southern plan in 1946 and 1951 respectively. The ten-year education plan was primarily aimed at preparing the Sudanese people, mainly Northerners, to absorb the impending political, administrative, and economic changes that were to follow independence.<sup>39</sup>

The task of implementing educational unification policy fell in the hands of the first Sudanese Minister of Education, Abdel Rahman Ali Taha (1948-1953). After a tour in the South in 1949, Abdel Rahman Ali Taha designed a five-year plan including the introduction of the Arabic language in Southern schools.<sup>40</sup> The unification of the schooling system was followed by the nationalization of missionary schools. The new Minister of Education, Ali Abdi Rahman (1955-56) states that the government curriculum is imposed on missionary schools. The next Minister of Education, Ziyada Uthman Arbab (1956-62) oversaw the nationalization of missionary schools. While meeting the missionary representatives on Feb 13, 1957, he announced that; *“the government was to take over schools with effect from April 1, 1957 – village, elementary and intermediate, and teacher training institutes schools except those for girls due to lack of*

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 29.

*appropriate staff.”* In 1957 the government took control of schools in the South from the various Missionaries.<sup>41</sup>

Gordon Memorial College single secondary school until the 1940s, it was initially opened to cater for educational needs of Northern Sudanese only. The students at this college followed a two-year general curriculum before specializing in teaching, administration, accounting, law, science, engineering, or trade.<sup>42</sup> Access to public education in colonial North Sudan was marked by high disparities between provinces, concentrating in Khartoum and between boys and girls. Before the Southern policy was abandoned, the Southerners who qualified for secondary education were sent to Uganda. Those from Catholic school background sent to St. Aleos Nyapea, West Nile region, and the Protestant educated ones were sent to Nabumali in the Eastern region. Post elementary school was restricted to a tiny elite.<sup>43</sup> By the time of independence elementary schools catered for 76,996 pupils, while intermediate schools had only 4,675 and secondary schools had 1,700 pupils, some 722 were enrolled in higher education.<sup>44</sup> In 1964 Southern Sudan had only two secondary schools, Rumbek and Juba Commercial. Joshua Otor Akol<sup>45</sup> stated that when he joined Juba Commercial Secondary School in July 1964 there were about 480 Southern Sudanese students in those schools, 160 at Juba Commercial and 320 at Rumbek.

#### STAGES OF SOUTHERN SUDANESE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN POST-INDEPENDENCE

##### *The Abdallah Khalil and Aboud Regimes, 1957–1964*

When the idea of separating the South from North was abandoned following the 1947 Juba conference, efforts were made to develop a unitary state. Chapter 6 of 1951 Five Year Development Plan covered the development of education and it included: a) adoption of Arabic writing scripts for Southern Sudan languages, and, b) laying plans for new teacher training institutions and production of books and teaching materials in Arabic. The attempt to change the writing script of Southern languages from Roman to Arabic alphabets stands out as one radical plan which characterizes the implementation of the Arabization of the South.<sup>46</sup>

When Abdallah Khalil came to power in 1957 and was succeeded by General Ibrahim Aboud in 1958 the Arabization of education became the central policies of the two governments as evidence in the minutes of Headmasters’ Conference of Upper Nile Province on December 28, 1959. At the conference, Sir el Khatim Khalifa, Assistant Director of Education, Southern Provinces, stated that the school is the best means for the unification of the country where the same ideas and ideals are transmitted to youngsters.<sup>47</sup> He went to state that Upper Nile Province had made wide paces in this respect and he is confident that shortly all schools in the south would be Arabized.<sup>48</sup> In this address to the head teachers of Upper Nile Province, Sir El Khatim was violating one preamble of UNESCO which states that the great and terrible war that ended in the early 1940s, the Second World War. This was a war made possible by the denial of

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Joshua Otor Akol in Juba, South Sudan on May 19, 2020.

<sup>46</sup> Rondyang, H. Wani (2007). *The role of indigenous languages in southern Sudan: educational language policy and planning*. Doctoral thesis, Institute of Education, University of London.

<sup>47</sup> South Sudan Archives (1959). *Headmasters’ conference Upper Nile Province, December 28, 1959*. Bor Education, South Sudan.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

democratic principles of the dignity, equality, and mutual respect of men, and by the propagation, in their place, through ignorance and prejudice, of the doctrine of the inequality of men and races. He was, therefore, opening a door for protests, and riots. The same UNESCO preamble advocated for the diffusion of culture.

Since reading ability is an important element in students' ability to grasp educational content, research has tended to focus on how the medium of instruction influences reading abilities of learners.<sup>49</sup> It is also seen as an extension of mothering for youngsters. Some researchers claim that academic achievement in Africa has been problematic because learners have been deprived of acquiring education through African languages.<sup>50</sup> Joseph Oduho and William Deng<sup>51</sup> gave this as an explanation why in 1960 University of Khartoum had 1216 students of whom 60 were Southern Sudanese, the three Cairo University branches in Sudan had no Southerners and Khartoum Technical schools had 1000 students, 30 of whom were Southerners. When Sir El Khatim el Khalifa stated that he could never dream of unification of Sudan unless all schools are unified in syllabus, ideas, songs, slogans, and other teachings<sup>52</sup>, Southern Sudanese read it as politics of marginalization. This is a violation of UNESCO's aspiration for universal consensus and social inclusion.<sup>53</sup>

The education system which had government-controlled socio-political ideals for the three southern provinces came into effect by take-over of the mission schools in April 1957. In the 1960s village school teachers were taken to the north to be trained as Arabic teachers. The schools in the South were then integrated into the system of Sudan government schools already in existence, forming a unified system. Most of the Arabic teachers in the South were therefore those Southern Sudanese who had the opportunity to attend the two-year post-elementary course in Arabic. The difficulty of the language, and the short period provided for the course, ill prepares them for the teaching of this language.<sup>54</sup> Textbooks adapted to the child's capacity and the environment was available. Teachers prepared for the job were passing out yearly from post-elementary and intermediate Teachers' Training Centers.<sup>55</sup>

By the 1950s there was a nascent Christian elite in the South. There were fears of conversion to Islamic religion when Sir el Khatim el Khalifa spoke of a unified education system during the Mahdia Regime and the good qualities it could give to the Sudanese people.<sup>56</sup> During the Mahdia period, 1881–1898, Khalwa was the main source of education where subjects taught were Arabic writing and reading, simple arithmetic, the Quran and Quranic exegesis, and Islamic jurisprudence.<sup>57</sup> A child who completed elementary education found that he had learned only a few phrases from the Quran, which cannot serve him any purpose since the spoken language differs from written.<sup>58</sup> In the Intermediate level, a child continues with Arabic and some English but when sitting final exams after four years the great majority

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<sup>49</sup> Bernard, Nchindila (2017). Investigating benefits of mother tongue instruction in multilingual Africa: the role of Content and Language Integrated Learning, *Journal for Language Teaching*, Volume 51 Number 2, (December 2017). Pp. 11–33.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>53</sup> Borjian, Maryam (2014). Language-education policies and international institutions: The World Bank's vs. UNESCO's global framework, *Language Problems and Language Planning*, Volume 38, Issue 1, (January 2014). Pp. 1–18.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 29.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 5.

of Southern children fail in both languages. Consequently, the Southern child had to abandon schooling or is deceitfully made to join an Islamic Mahad (institute) irrespective of his creed, with the object of making him a Fakir (Islamic teacher) in order to convert his Southern brethren into Islam.<sup>59</sup> In 1961 the first group from the South who sat for Arabic in Northern Sudan schools failed.<sup>60</sup>

Generally, the use of Arabic as the language of instruction tends to open educational possibilities to Arab children at the expense of the Southern Africans. The introduction of compulsory use of Arabic in the South wiped out the solid educational foundation laid down by the British administration.<sup>61</sup> Since independence, however, the African child has to start all his instruction in Arabic. There were no proper textbooks adapted for his/her use, and there are no teachers sufficiently prepared for the job.<sup>62</sup> The insistence by the Sudan Government on Arabic and Arabic characters was also to bring pressure on Christian churches not to impart Christianity but in Arabic letters. In 1960 a Christian center was closed down and the instructor imprisoned because a blackboard with Roman characters (numbers) was found in the chapel by the District Commissioner of Yei.<sup>63</sup> Arabic was first introduced to the Southern schools in 1952 on a limited scale. Special textbooks printed by the Publications Bureau Juba such as Wani el Sagheer (Small Wani) and Seili Bari (Bari prayers or Pray Bari). They looked at Arabic as if it is Chinese or foreign.<sup>64</sup> Its imposition on the people led to protests, riots, and closure of schools in the South.

The results of the intermediate entrance examinations were always painfully unacceptable to the South.<sup>65</sup> All Northern students in Southern Sudan always passed and were promoted in comparison to a few Southern Sudanese. This made many Southern students see no reason why they should continue with studies. Jones Lukadi Yosefa<sup>66</sup> of Bereka village, Lanya County, Central Equatoria State was scheduled to complete at Loka Intermediate in December 1962 but two weeks before sitting for exams students embarked on rebellion against the Sudan government. Students from Juba Commercial and Rumbek secondary schools were joined by those in an intermediate school in class boycotts. In August 1955 Southern soldiers in Torit had mutinied, among others, the officers of the Sudanese army were mainly composed of Northern Arabs. When the mutiny failed, the mutineers went into the bushes of Southern Sudan while others entered Uganda.

In December 1960 many Southern politicians went into exile due to impending arrests. By 1962 the politicians and soldiers formed Sudan African Closed Districts National Union (later renamed Sudan African National Union) to fight for the independence of Southern Sudan. On January 15 1963 many of the said students crossed into Uganda and joined this guerrilla movement while others went to look for educational opportunities outside Sudan. Sudan reacted by closing all secondary schools in the South and reopening them in the North.

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Wawa, Yosa (2005). *The Southern Sudanese Pursuits of Self-Determination: Documents in Political History*. Kampala: Marianum Press.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 60.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Interview with Jones Lukadi Yosepa in Juba, South Sudan on March 18, 2020.

*The Nimeiri Regime, 1969–1985*

Jaafar Mohammed Nimeiri came to power in May 1969 on a Communist sponsored coup. To quell the Southern Sudanese resistance, he signed the Addis Ababa Agreement in 1972. Article 6<sup>67</sup> of the Addis Ababa Agreement states that Arabic shall be an official language for Sudan and English the principal language for the South without prejudice to the use of any language or languages, which may serve a practical necessity for the efficient and expeditious discharge of executive and administrative functions of the Region. In 1974 the Regional Parliament of the South established following the Addis Ababa Agreement, in its sitting No 23, debated the languages of instruction in Southern schools.<sup>68</sup>

Hon. Joshua Dau Diu, Zerraf Constituency moved the motion that English language be introduced as the medium of instruction in educational institutions of the region as from 1974/75 academic year. He quoted the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972. The motion was seconded by Hon. Simon Mori Didumo of the Intellectuals' constituency on its sitting No 24, Thursday, June 13, 1974. Contributing in support of the motion Hon. Eliaba Surur, Central Western Constituency said that it is common to fear throughout the country that when you talk of introducing English, in the Southern Region, it is viewed as the way to break away from the unity of the country. He further emphasized by saying that "*I am sure the unity of the country is not only achieved by speaking one language. So many united countries use many languages.*" Hons. Joshua Okwaci Nyilek from Upper Nile, Province Administrative Unity, and Hon. Lawrence Lual Lual, Regional Minister for Presidential Affairs opposed the motion. The voting was: Ayes =22, Noes = Nil, and Abstentions = 13.

The Hon. Minister of Education, Hon. Michael Tawil Ngamude, wrote to the High Executive Council, Juba about this parliamentary debate and its result. Reacting to Hon. Ngamude's letter, The High Executive Council replied that after considering the submission of the Regional Ministry of Education Ref No. MESR/SR/1.A.1/5 dated October 23, 1975, on the use of language for education in the Southern Region and in light of its resolution No 247 of 29 September 1975:

*The High Executive Council in its meeting No 103 of November 8, 1975, resolved that: a) in rural schools, vernacular be used as a medium of instruction in the first 2 years with English and Arabic introduced orally. Also, vernacular be used in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years while English and Arabic are intensified; and Arabic be used as a medium of instruction in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> years while English is intensified. In urban schools, Arabic be the medium of instruction, and English be introduced orally; while Arabic continues as a medium of instruction in 3<sup>rd</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> years while English is intensified. Moreover, in all junior secondary schools, Arabic shall be the medium of instruction while English is intensified, while all senior secondary schools and post-senior secondary schools, English shall be the medium of instruction and Arabic taught as a language.*

Ignoring the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972, the education planners imposed Arabic as a prerequisite to obtaining a Sudan School Certificate in 1974. Brilliant performance in any other subject is overlooked in favor of Arabic irrespective of whether one is going to study medicine or Engineering or Arabic. Some Southerners protested that this state of affairs has an appreciable disadvantage to Southern Sudanese.<sup>69</sup> This resulted in the creation of Second Class Citizens by which means the Southerners were implicitly

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<sup>67</sup> Reviewed the Addis Ababa Agreement document (p 229) on the Problem of South Sudan in 1972.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Akau, AGD (1979). Why Arabic? A letter to the editor of Southern Sudan Magazine (p 2) in 1979.

defined with total disregard of the rich traditional African values, norms, and beliefs.<sup>70</sup> The report, which followed the UNESCO Education for All framework, analyzed language policy, implementation, and practices in 25 African countries. What emerged was a clear indication that a firm foundation in mother tongue instruction, coupled with learning the colonial language, is critical for understanding new concepts and expressing what has been learned. That ignorance of each other's ways and lives has been a common cause, throughout the history of mankind, of that suspicion and mistrust between the peoples of the world through which their differences have all too often broken into war.

In its Manifesto, the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) stated that the Sudanese reality consists of two diversities, the historical and contemporary.<sup>71</sup> Yet this reality has been ignored, swept aside, by all the governments that have come and gone in Khartoum since independence in 1956. It was fighting in order to institute a common Sudanese identity, a Sudanese commonality, a Sudanese commonwealth, that embraces all Sudanese, and to which all Sudanese pledge undivided loyalty irrespective of their religion, race, or tribe.<sup>72</sup> Therefore, many Southern Sudanese students from universities to secondary schools abandoned studies and joined the Sudan People's Liberation Movement.

#### *Bashir Regime, 1989–2005*

In 1989 Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir came to power in a military coup supported by Islamists and Arabists which called itself the National Salvation Government. In order to find peaceful solutions to the problems, the government called for a dialogue conference on peace. In October 1989 the conference recommended: a) Arabic is the official language of Sudan; b) Languages, culture, and history of Sudan are characteristic of the country, c) Educational planning should consider the historical experience of Arabic language as a mother tongue of a large Sudanese group and a lingua franca for numerous groups as well as being the official language, d) Educational planning should consider the historical experience of English language as one of special status in the Southern Region; e) Educational planning should consider the local dialects and adopt the educational wisdom of beginning education with a dialect; f) Educational planning should consider the fact of language, cultural and environmental diversity to be definite educational experiences, and; g) Educational planning should be connected with the mother languages.

In a way, the recommendations gave equal considerations to Arabic, English, and mother tongue but in reality, the official trend was towards Arabization.<sup>73</sup> But in 1990 the National Salvation Government of Omar al-Bashir issued decree No. 18 for convening a conference on education policies. The conference was held between 17-19 September 1990 and recommended: a) Deepen and accentuate religious belief in pupils; b) Strengthen the spirit of national unity; and, c) Arabic programs be strengthened in, the Nuba Mountains, Southern Blue Nile, and Beja areas.

The recommendations of September 1990 diverged from the peace conference. In 1991/92 a new curriculum was released with immense and great influence of Islamic and Arabic content. The curriculum exhibits Arab-Islamic images. The Bakt el Rhuda institute published a series of books for primary one to six.<sup>74</sup> This violated UNESCO's preamble which dismisses the social, cultural, and the doctrine of the

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<sup>70</sup> Memorandum by Equatoria students in universities and higher institutions in Sudan to Southern, concerning Arabisation and Islamisation of Southern Sudan. In: Wawa, Yosa (2005). *The Southern Sudanese Pursuits of Self-Determination: Documents in Political History*. Kampala: Marianum Press.

<sup>71</sup> Sudan People's Liberation Movement Manifesto of 1983.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

inequality of men and races. This is called Taseel education policy where it aimed at reshaping the Sudanese society in an Islamic mode.<sup>75</sup>

Under Bashir, each school day commenced with an assembly in which the school authorities selected a pupil to recite Quranic verses. This exercise was normally followed by the presentation of prophetic messages (hadith), Islamic philosophy, praises of Jihad, and nationalism.<sup>76</sup> The Bashir government was so theocratic that the Islamized and Arabized syllabi began to be taught all over the country.<sup>77</sup> On its side, the Sudan People Liberation Movement<sup>78</sup>, in its first liberation council convention of 183 members with legislative powers (Article 2.5.0) and Article 19.2.3 pronounced the medium of instruction as follows: a) Primary 1 to 3 – mother tongue with the introduction of English, and, b) Primary 4 - above - English the medium of instruction.

In response to the 1994 Chukudum convention, the Secretariat of Education of the SPLM issued an education policy statement whose Article 2.6 promoted love, pride, and respect for New Sudan's diverse positive cultural heritage.<sup>79</sup> This was a direct challenge to various regimes in Khartoum's plans of attempting to spread Arabic at the expense of Southern languages. The argument is that English is preferred because it is foreign to all, unlike Arabic which is a first to 39% of the Sudanese population.

There was nothing secret about the variation in education policy between the SPLM and Bashir's government. Alunyo Alfred<sup>80</sup> who started his secondary education witnessed the students protests and riots in Juba against the introduction of Arabic as a language of instruction. He had been instructed in English from St. Teresa Primary School in Torit and Buluk Intermediate in Juba in 1989 later joining a secondary school in 1990. At that time most teachers in the south were taken to Khartoum to be given a crash course in Arabic to enable them to teach. By January 1992 many students were arrested. This – mobilized many secondary school students to leave Juba for SPLM/A controlled areas and others sought for educational opportunities in Uganda. Alunyo left Southern Sudan on January 5 1992 and followed the big boys. They walked without stopping and resting until they reached Kor Tag when they met the first SPLA barracks. They were then taken to Isoke and trained as Jamus, two officers. Around July/August the Sudan Government took Torit, he left for Uganda where he joined a school at Kochea in Adjumani district (Uganda) and later qualified to join the medical school at Makerere University in 1999. He was able to perform very well because all students in Uganda had to struggle like anybody else to learn in English.

## CONCLUSION

Language is the embodiment of culture. Every person, according to the UNESCO constitution, has a right to his or her culture including chiefs such as Chief Busu of Kajo Keji who demonstrated that he wanted his dialect recorded. In his language policy orientations, Richard Ruiz listed three language orientations; as a problem, as a right, and a resource. In the Sudan language policy, no attempt was made to see language as a resource. As assimilationists, they saw multiple languages as a problem. It became a real political problem because the South thought they had a right to their languages and cultures. The

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Sudan People's Liberation Movement. (2002). *Section 7.3 of Education policy of the new Sudan and implementation guidelines*. Yei, Himman-New Cush, Sudan.

<sup>80</sup> Interview with Alunyo Alfred in Juba, South Sudan on March 20, 2020.

policymakers of Sudan were concerned with the construction of a nation-state based on Arabic language or culture, the language of the few but powerful elites. In so doing, they even ignored the right of people to their languages which resulted in students' protests. The persistence of Southern Sudanese students' riots led to the closure of schools and their transfer to the North. Most of the riotous students from mainly the Equatorial region who either joined ranks of the various rebel groups during the period under investigation or went to neighboring countries, such as Uganda and Kenya, to look for educational opportunities. The students saw the language policy of the independent Sudan, 1956-2005, as a function of domination or assimilation or cultural subjugation. The UNESCO preamble that states that throughout the history of mankind, suspicion and mistrust between the peoples due to their differences have all too often broken into wars attests to the story of Sudan. The monolingual language policies of Sudan were not seen by the South as contributing to the development or maintenance of equity but seen as domination and imposition of a foreign language and values over an indigenous Africans.