A NATION IN TURMOIL: IS EDUCATION TO BLAME?

AN ANALYSIS OF SUDAN’S NATIONAL BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM

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Abstract

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A NATION IN TURMOIL: IS EDUCATION TO BLAME? AN ANALYSIS OF SUDAN’S NATIONAL BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM (127 pp.)

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This thesis analyzes the national Basic School curriculum of Sudan and its implications on national social cohesion. The research used thematic analysis to analyze the approved textbooks. The research employed qualitative interviewing to solicit information from key persons in Sudan’s curriculum development as well as educators and activists.

The themes identified are patriotism, resolving conflict through violence, collectivism and cooperation, family values, environmental conservation, and discipline and compliance. The findings indicate a dominance of Arab-Muslim culture. Two opposing opinions are contested in the qualitative interviews. Officials stated that the curriculum is inclusive. All other interviewees stated that the curriculum is centered on Northern Sudan’s culture and history. In addition, Islam is emphasized in the curriculum.

The research establishes that the curriculum is one-sided. Dominant groups have used education as a platform to advance a hegemonic agenda, thereby fundamentally reinforcing division and polarization within Sudanese Society.

Approved:

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CHAPTER 1 : INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Sudan stands out in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century as a country that was embroiled in one of history’s longest civil wars, a war lasting for 23 years. The war pitted Northern Sudanese who are culturally Arab and mainly Muslim by religion, against Southern ethnic groups who are seen as African and practice both traditional folk religions and Christianity. Most scholars hold that the conflict was rooted in the hegemony that the Arab Muslim Northerners have over the African Christian Southerners (Deng, 1995; Khalid, 2003; Lesch, 1998). This conflict had an economic dimension that pitted a more-developed North against a less-developed South. Moreover, at one level, it was a racial conflict, as the civil war was between Arabs and what might loosely be called the indigenous Black population. On another level, it was a religious conflict between Islam on one side, and Christianity and traditional folk religions on the other. Both the racial and religious conflicts combined to form a third point of contest – a cultural conflict (Loisa, 2005).

During the fifty-eight years of Anglo-Egyptian administration both Northern and Southern Sudan were administered as separate states under a Governor General (Please see Fig 1-1 for the regional map of modern Sudan). This policy, however, reinforced Arabism and Islam in the North, while Southern Sudan was ruled as an African colonial territory where African culture and Christianity were encouraged. In addition, the British introduced the concept of “Closed Districts" which included Southern Sudan, the Nuba Mountains of Southern Kordofan and the Funj areas of the Southern Blue Nile. The
declared justification for this policy was to protect Southerners from slave traders from the Northern part of the country. Along with this, British formalized a "language policy" that allowed vernacular languages to be taught in primary schools in Southern Sudan where English was designated the official language. Arabic was not used in schools and government offices in Southern Sudan (Biong, 2003). Since independence, Northerners, who had undergone centuries of assimilation in Arabic and Islamic cultures, often made, and continue to make, attempts through Northern dominated governments to extend this process to the other regions of the country including the South and the West. Successive post-independence central governments have adopted different policies aimed at nationalization to construct a united Sudan, with Arabic-Islamic culture as the key determinant for national unity, defining Sudan as an Arabic Islamic state (Khalid, 1990). Since independence, the Arabic language has been considered the national language and the official medium of instruction in government, commerce and the education system (Deng, 1995; Lesch, 1998). Hence, the Arabic language has special significance in the context of the Sudanese conflict. Being the language of the Quran; “Arabic culture … is automatically linked to faith in minds of most Sudanese” (Lesch, 1998: 21). These attempts result in marginalizing non-Arab cultural identities and creating a sense of alienation. Religion is another tool that is used by Northern-dominated governments to assimilate the whole country into one culture. For instance Hassan al Turabi, the Sudanese intellectual and political leader, believes that Sudan was a modern model of the Islamic state, which would lead to the revival of Islam through the Sharia (Islamic law) (The Islamic State, 1994). The government’s unilateral declaration of the Sharia in 1983 as the supreme law of the land was the culmination of this Arab-Islamic hegemony.
While the role of forced Arabic culture is an issue of great concern to all segments of Sudanese population, its influence on education has far-reaching implications on the way Sudanese view themselves and each other. Education can be thought of as a dynamic process that is always rooted in a socio-cultural context. It is not a neutral endeavor. No form of education, as a source of knowledge, is politically neutral (Shor, 1992; Apple, 1991). Since the knowledge that is disseminated throughout schools is selected from a much larger pool of knowledge, “what counts as legitimate knowledge is the result of the complex power relations and struggle among identifiable class, race, gender/sex, and religious groups” (Apple, 1991:2). The content that is included or excluded, the frames that are portrayed, the groups that are represented, underrepresented or misrepresented; and the themes that are emphasized are all politically loaded aspects of education. Curricula are the educational instruments that circulate the knowledge diffused through the educational process. The way the curriculum is set can influence the educational outcomes. Critical analysis of the curriculum may provide a better understanding of the nature of the relationships between education, social divisions, and political conflict (Tawil & Harley, 2004).
Figure 1-1: Sudan Regional Map

Source: [http://www.sudan.net/government/regmap.html](http://www.sudan.net/government/regmap.html)
1.2 The Educational System in Sudan

During British colonization, South Sudan and the North had significantly different educational systems. The North, with its long history of Arabic-Islamic culture, adopted the Arabic language as the medium of instruction in schools. In the South, the British left education up to missionary schools; however these, like most missionary schools in Africa, suffered from lack of financial and human resources. Thus, the missionaries could not afford to open enough schools, which meant that the South ended up receiving poor quality of education.

The Juba conference of 1947, which was held to discuss the state of the South in an independent Sudan, recommended establishment of a national curriculum with integrated content as a way of achieving national unity. In 1949, the Sudanese National Assembly decided on the adoption of Arabic as the language of teaching of all educational levels. In 1954, the Arabic language replaced English and native languages as the medium of education in all schools in the South. In 1957, the Ministry of Education issued a decree outlawing independent missionary schools in the South and put them under the direct administration of the central government. After October 1964, the language of instruction in secondary schools was changed from English to Arabic. The 1970s witnessed a turning towards the Arab League and its Arab-Islamic ideology, especially after the 1967 Egyptian-Israeli war. This was manifested clearly in the content of the general education curriculum, particularly in primary education. These changes in
curriculum were attributed to keeping pace with the declared nationalistic goals of the Arab league (Selman et al, 2003).

In terms of socio-economic development indicators, Sudan suffers wide regional disparities between the North and the South (World Bank, 2004). In the colonial period, the British government concentrated economic development in the North, because of its agricultural products, especially cotton, whereas the South was neglected. Post-independence regimes – both democratic and authoritarian – continued the colonial policy of neglect and marginalization of the South. Resources were poorly divided among different provinces and were concentrated in the Northern and Central areas leading to impoverishment of other regions. By this time, the socio-economic disparities created during British rule had sharply widened. In 1960, after four years of independence, Southern children were less likely to attend school than children of the North. They accounted for less than 8% of the total students in primary schools, about 7% of intermediate schools and only 5% of those in higher education (Biong, 2003). These conditions are not really improving after a half a century of independence. In 2000, 50% of boys and 42% of girls were nationally enrolled in primary education. Only 53% of those enrolled completed primary school. Statistics for the South are considerably lower with regard to education. Primary enrollment is estimated to be around 30% for boys and 10% for girls, and only 7% of the teachers serving in these schools have received basic teacher training (UNDP, 2005).
1.3 Problem Statement

On December 31, 2004, the Government of Sudan (GOS) and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/SPLA) signed a peace agreement that ended one of history’s longest civil wars. The war had left two million people dead and more than four million displaced. A new interim constitution was approved by the National Assembly in July 2005 heralding a new era of peace. This interim constitution states that:

The Republic of the Sudan is a sovereign, democratic, decentralized, multi-cultural, multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-lingual State; committed to the respect and promotion of human dignity and founded on justice, equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms. It is an all-embracing homeland wherein races and cultures coalesce and religions co-exist in harmony (Sudan Constitution, 2005).

These constitutional stipulations form the ideal. For it to be realized, all Sudanese people and authorities should be committed to the promotion of social cohesion and deepening trust and accord among different groups. It is fundamental that the history of prejudice be overcome, in order that structural imbalances and socio-economic and cultural inequalities inherent in societal institutions are corrected.

A key starting point is the education system where young minds are molded. As articulated by UNESCO: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed" (UNESCO Constitution). Schools, among other societal institutions, can play an essential role in promoting peace (or hatred). The importance of schools comes from the fact that they make what is considered as the “official knowledge” available. Schools “participate in creating what society has
recognized as legitimate and truthful. They help set the canons of truthfulness and, as such, also help re-create a major reference point of what knowledge, culture, belief, and morality really are” (Apple, 1991:4). It has been proven that “ethnic attitudes” are formed early, and that once positive or negative prejudices are formed, they tend to increase with time (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000).

Half a century of civil war has left Sudanese society suffering from deep ethnic polarization. With this polarization and the high number of internally displaced persons, mainly from the South moving to the North and Central Sudan, educational institutions (especially primary schools) can play a fundamental role in promoting inter-cultural, inter-ethnic and inter-religious understanding, leading to peace and tolerance. The reverse is also possible. However, schools are only channels for disseminating information already spelt out in the curriculum. An analytical understanding of factors that underpin, shape and influence the design and delivery of education – as outlined in the curriculum – is needed. Critical analysis of the curriculum provides for a better understanding of the relationship between education, social divisions, and political conflict (Tawil & Harley, 2004), and better insight into developing a tolerant and balanced curriculum, which is fundamental to healing and reconciling a country ravaged by war. This can be a key step in building sustainable peace in Sudan. Failure to undertake such measures may lead to races, cultures, and religions being unable to co-exist in harmony and unanimity. Without this, peace efforts are bound to fail and the violence, which has been the main feature of Sudan for almost half a century, may recur on a larger scale and result in higher loss of human life.
1.4 Purpose of the Study

This research aims:

- To study the portrayal of minorities (Non-Arabs, Non-Muslims) in the primary school curriculum.
- To investigate to what degree the curriculum fosters tolerance, social cohesion and co-existence or perpetuates violence and division.
- To investigate the role of the education system in promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence between different ethnic groups in Sudan.

1.5 Research Questions

- Which themes are emphasized in the primary school textbooks?
- How often does the representation of the different ethnic groups occur and how are they represented?
- Which religions are represented in the primary school curriculum and how are they represented?
- Which historical events are emphasized and how are they represented?
- Which languages are emphasized in the primary school curriculum?
- What images are associated with minorities (Non-Arab, Non-Muslims) in the primary school curriculum?
1.6 **Significance of the Study**

This study aims to critically analyze the Sudanese national primary school curriculum and identify the biases and imbalances, if any, and to investigate to what extent the curriculum fosters social cohesion and tolerance. The study aims to gain better understanding of the relationships between education, social divisions, and political conflict. This will help education theorists, policymakers, as well as governmental and non-governmental organizations, in developing an inclusive and balanced curriculum, which will work in tandem with the provisions of the new Sudanese constitution. National unity will be better achieved through an inclusive and balanced curriculum. Thus, peace will stand a better chance of enduring in Sudan.

School administrators and teachers may use the findings of this study to facilitate peaceful coexistence in the classroom and elsewhere in schooling environments, among children from different ethnic groups. As schools are part of socialization agencies that include families, media and worship sites, the findings of this study will also be useful and influential in these other agencies.

Furthermore, this study will also provide insights into the sources of educational and socio-economic imbalances in Sudan and help find ways to address them, hence enhancing the peace project and national development.

1.7 **Structure of the Study**

This study is divided into five chapters. The second chapter contains the literature review with a historical review of Sudan’s conflict and the development of its educational system in relation to the conflict. The chapter also places this study within the literature
on the relationship between education and conflict and social tensions, education and hegemony, and the role of curriculum in social cohesion/division. Chapter three is a description of the research methodology. The study uses thematic analysis and qualitative interviews. The chapter describes the sampling procedure and themes development as well as the interviewing process. Chapter four is devoted to textbook analysis and a narrative of interviews and discussion of the main findings. Chapter five provides summary for the study, and highlights conclusions and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides an overview of the literature. It is divided into two main sections. Section one provides a historical background of the conflict, the development of the educational system and the curriculum policy. Since this research aims at understanding the role of education in Sudan’s nation-building, section two explores the intellectual discourse on education and social cohesion. The section starts with an overview of the positive and negative roles that education can play. The relationship between education, hegemony and control over knowledge is discussed. The influence of education on self-identity construction and mechanism of “Othering” are discussed as well. Lastly, this section examines the role of textbooks, especially for history, language and religion.

2.1 History of a Polarized Society

2.1.1 Introduction

Sudan is a multiethnic and multi-religious country. The largest ethnic category, Arabs, constitutes nearly 40 percent of the total population, of which nearly 55 percent live in the northern part of the country; and mostly Muslims. Major Muslim (but non-Arab) groups are Nubians in the far north, nomadic Beja in the northeast, and the Fur of the west. Southern non-Muslim groups include Dinka (more than 10 percent of the total population and 40 percent in south), Nuer, and numerous smaller Nilotic and other ethnic groups. 70% of the country’s population is Sunni Muslim, mostly in the North, 25% hold
indigenous folk beliefs, and Christianity accounts for 5% of the population mostly in the South and Khartoum (Library of Congress, 2004; Sudan Embassy in DC, 2006)

Sudan’s past is closely bound up with its present challenges. The historical process of dichotomizing the country into the Arab North and African South dates from the 7th century. At the time, the Arab-Muslim Empire invaded the Sudan, and concluded peace accords with Northern people that established remote Arab control over the country and opened communication channels with the Arabs. Through conquest, intermarriage, trade and settlement, Northern Sudan underwent Arab-Muslim assimilation. Arab migration and settlement toward the south was hindered by the tough geographical terrain and harsh tropical climate. The relationship between the Arabs and Southerners was limited to those who were engaged in the slave trade (Deng, 1995; Khalid, 2003).

In 1820, joint Turkish-Egyptian forces invaded the northern regions of the Sudan. Promises of gold and slaves to build his empire were the main motives of Mohamed Ali Basha, the governor of Egypt. During this era, slave traders used the North as a base for their operations, carrying out incursions into the southern regions. Resistance to the Turks and Egyptians came from both the North and South, resulting in a successful revolt led by Mohamed A. Al Mahdi in 1884. In spite of the Islamic nature of the Mahadist revolution, “the south, though it did not convert, saw the religion of the Mahadist as a tool for liberation” (Deng, 1995, p.11). The Mahadist regime, however, greatly disappointed its supporters from the South by continuing, like its ancestors, the slave raids (Deng, 1995; Daly and Sikainga, 1993). “Islam was turned against the South, thus becoming a divisive element” (1995, p.11). As stated by Suliman:
The memory of the brutal slave trade conducted mainly by mercenaries of the Northern Jellaba has lived on in the culture of the South. The experience of such aggression by Arab Muslims against Black Africans gave rise to Southern resistance to Islam and the embrace of Christianity, which Southerners perceived as being on their side against oppression. (Suliman, 2005)

The dichotomy of the slave-master relationship between the North and South in the Mahadist regime deeply shaped the development of the political and social sphere later.

2.1.2 British Colonial Legacy and Sudan Conflict

Anglo-Egyptian armies that conquered Sudan in 1898 ended the Mahadist regime and established a British-dominated condominium,¹ “with Egypt as little more than a rubber-stamp partner” (Deng, 1995: 77). During the 58 years of Anglo-Egyptian administration both Northern and Southern Sudan were administered as separate states under a Governor General. This policy, however, reinforced Arabism and Islam in the North, while Southern Sudan was ruled as an African colonial territory where African culture and Christianity were encouraged. In addition, the British introduced the concept of the Closed Districts which included Southern Sudan, the Nuba Mountains of Southern Kordofan and the Funj areas of Southern Blue Nile. Along with this policy, the British formalized a language policy that allowed vernacular languages to be taught in primary schools and English was designated the official language, while Arabic was not used in schools and government offices in the Southern Sudan (Biong, 2003). The British stated

¹ Joint rule by two or more nations
intention in introducing these policies was to stop the slave traders from the Northern part of the Sudan. However, some scholars have different views. For instance, Deng (1995) explains that these policies were led by the Egyptian anti-British revolution of 1919. The 1919 revolution

…led the British to break the close connection between the Sudan and Egypt, as a further obstacle to the spread of Arab influence and nationalism in the Nile Valley, to tighten their policy of separate development of the North and the South, marking a new phase in what became known as the Southern Policy (Deng, 1995: 80).

This British policy, in addition to the heritage of master-enslavement history, prevented the Sudanese of North and South from interacting with each other and identifying with each other (Khalid, 2003). In 1947, the British abruptly reversed their policy and determined that Southern and Northern Sudan would become one independent country. During colonialism, the British government concentrated economic development in the North, whereas the South was neglected. For the British rulers “the North promised return on foreign capital [through its agricultural products, especially cotton], it thus had a claim on the government’s disbursement of funds for education, health services, and general development which the South had not” (Dally & Sikainga, 1993: 6). As the South was highly underdeveloped and its educational opportunities were limited, the independence movement was led by Northerners (Deng, 1995). During the independence negotiations with the colonizers, the South was initially excluded from the handover of power and from the negotiations with Egypt (Khalid, 2003; Khalid, 1990; Deng, 1995; Dally, 1993). As Khalid stated, “the exclusion of the Southerners from the Cairo
negotiations was perhaps the most disastrous decision taken by Egypt and the Northern parties” (Khalid, 2003:55). One group of Sudanese was treated as more Sudanese than the other. During independence, the national assembly appointed a committee to draft a national constitution; only three of its forty-six members were Southerners (Deng, 1995:137). A wedge was further driven between a people with long standing historical misgivings. The Southerners were discontented. Subsequently, the Southerners’ demand for federalism was not only rejected but also outlawed. Dissatisfied and denied the option of federalism, the Southerners revolted in 1955. This dissatisfaction became one of the main factors that contributed to the first civil war in the Sudan (1955-1972).

2.1.3 Independent Sudan: A United Country, but Divided Society

Sudan entered into its independence era with a high burden of mistrust, marginalization and exclusion. Successive post-independence governments preserved the pattern of exclusion. The British separation policy, in addition to the heritage of the master-slave history, had “led to a sense of alienation that made Northerners and Southerners see each other as foreigners” (Deng, 1995:111). To reverse the British policies of separation, the North attempted to substitute Christianity and Western influence with Islam and Arabism (Deng, 1995; Khalid, 2003; Khalid, 1999; Dally, 1993). Post-independence central governments adopted an education system to construct a united Sudan, with Arabic and Islamic cultures as the key determinants for national unity (Khalid, 1990). According to Biong: “The ruling Northern elite saw the religious and cultural diversity of Sudan as a threat to unity and strove to eliminate it through education system as such diversity was perceived as tantamount to racio-cultural
hegemony” (Biong, 2003: 4). To the Southerners, this brought up many fears and they began to see independence as a mere change of outside masters from the British to the Northerners who defined the nation “in accordance with the symbols of their Arab-Islamic identity” (Deng, 1995:101).

The war resulting from the Southern revolt of 1955 was resolved in 1972 via the Addis Ababa Peace Agreement, which gave the South regional autonomy (Dally & Sikainga, 2001; Adar, 2001). Although the war was successfully resolved, President Numeiri breached the terms of the agreement. He later instituted the Islamic Sharia as the supreme law of the land in September 1983. Consequently, anti-Sharia groups, mainly in the South, formed the Sudan People's Liberation Movement and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLM/SPLA), in order to fight against the government, for political power and social equality.

On June 30 1989, a radical Islamic faction in the army, with the collaboration of the National Islamic Front (NIF) took over power. This new government introduced a new perspective to the Sudanese problem by dividing the country into Muslims and non-Muslims (Kufar) citizens, and transformed the political conflict into a religious one by introducing the concept of Jihad (holy war) against real or perceived Kufar. The country shifted from a neutral position of a secular state to a religious, specifically Islamic, state. Soon the war in the South moved northward into non-Arab areas in Darfur in the Western region of the country, the East and the Blue Nile area, thereby adding a racial dimension to the conflict.
2.1.4 Development Disparities

Sudan suffers wide regional disparities in economic and social development (World Bank, 2004). During colonialism, the British government concentrated economic development in the North because of its agricultural products, whereas the South was neglected. Consequently, while the Northern economy prospered, all other regions, including the South, West (Darfur), East (Beja land) and Blue Nile (Ingasana) were impoverished (Khalid, 2003). At the time of independence, Sudan was suffering from high socio-economic inequalities. In January 1956, Sudan’s national per capita GDP was about US $78 “classifying Sudan among the poorest countries in the world” (Ali et al, 2003: 22). The South’s per capita GDP at US $39 was half the national average, reflecting years of neglect and marginalization during the colonial period (Ali et al, 2003). Moreover, despite accounting for 28% of the Sudanese population at independence (Biong, 2003), the South accounted for less than 16% of agricultural output, about 18% of industrial output, and 9% of the output of the services sector (Ali et al, 2003). At independence, educational attainment in the whole country was very low; still, educational attainment in the South was significantly lower than the national average (Yongo-Bure, 1993).

Different post independence regimes – democratic and authoritarian – continued the colonial policy of neglect and marginalization. Resources were unfairly divided among different provinces and concentrated in the northern and central regions, leading to impoverishment of other regions. By this time, the socio-economic disparities created during British rule between the South and the North had widened sharply, shown in
Figure 2.1. It is clear that the disparity between north and south that was created during the colonization period widened during the first four years of independence (1956-1960) (Oduho & Deng, 1963)

![Sudan Administrative Map](http://www.sudan.net/government/admnmap.html)
Figure 2-2: Access to Education 1960

Source: Data from Oduho and Deng, 1963
There is high correlation between access to education and human and economic development. It has been proved that the higher the education level the greater the income one can earn, and the higher the chances of employment resulting in high association between education and quality of life improvement. Therefore, the development gap between the North and South can be partially attributed to the unfair access to education opportunities that was available to the South during the colonization and after independence.

The condition is not really improving after half a century of independence. Within the last three decades, estimates of national poverty rates show a steady increase in poverty from 50% in 1968 up to 75% in 1986 and as high as 80% in 1997 (UNDP, 1997). The situation in the South and West is worse. Cobham documented that the incidence and depth of poverty is above the national average in southern and western Sudan (Cobham, 2005). When considering human development indicators, in 1993 life expectancy for women varied from 49.2 years in the South, 53.6 in the East, 56.4 in the West, up to 58.8 in the North and 59.8 in Khartoum. (Cobham, 2005) A woman in the South is likely to die ten years earlier than a woman from Khartoum or the North. In 2000, 50% of boys and 42 % of girls were nationally enrolled in primary education. Only 53% of those enrolled completed primary school (UNDP, 2005). According to USAID, South Sudan’s estimated indictors include a high population growth of almost 3% per year with a female population of greater than 60%; infant mortality at 150 per 1,000 births and severe malnutrition of around 21% among children under 5 (USAID, 2005). Educational indicators for the South are considerably lower than the North. Primary enrollment is
estimated to be around 30% for boys and 10% for girls, and only 7% of the teachers are formally trained. An estimated 80% of all adults, especially women, are unable to read (USAID, 2005). Table 2.2 shows the expenditure in education as a percentage of the total public expenditure for the period of 1997 - 2002. The table shows a constant decrease in expenditure for education. Table 2.3 shows the official statistics of the enrollment rate in primary education for 2002/2003 for girls and boys, and Figure 2-2 shows the total gross enrollment rate by state. It is worth noting here that in most cases official statistics tend to be inaccurate and provided for political profit. In addition to that, lack of resources hinders constant update of official statistics. However, even the official data underlies the high educational measurement disparity. The enrollment rate varies from 100% in the North State to 30% in Bahar Elghazal State in the Southern Sudan (Southern states are italicized, emphasis from the author)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Percentage of educational expenditure to public expenditure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>6.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002/2003</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Educational Statistics, Ministry of Education, Sudan*
Figure 2-3: Gross Enrollment Ratio 2002/2003

Source: Educational Statistics and Planning, Ministry of Education, Sudan
### Table 2-2: Gross\(^2\) Enrollment Ratio 2002/2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern State</td>
<td>102.9</td>
<td>97.1</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nile State</td>
<td>88.0</td>
<td>84.5</td>
<td>86.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khartoum</td>
<td>85.3</td>
<td>82.4</td>
<td>83.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gezira</td>
<td>84.2</td>
<td>75.2</td>
<td>79.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Kordofan</td>
<td>80.3</td>
<td>68.3</td>
<td>74.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Nile</td>
<td>67.5</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>63.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinar</td>
<td>66.2</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>63.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Sea</td>
<td>65.4</td>
<td>59.3</td>
<td>62.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>62.9</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>59.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Darfur</td>
<td>63.4</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>56.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gadarif</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>53.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kasala</td>
<td>56.0</td>
<td>46.8</td>
<td>51.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Kordofan</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>42.9</td>
<td>50.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Nile</td>
<td>54.2</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>47.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Kordofan</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>41.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W. Darfur</td>
<td>45.0</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>36.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Nile (South)</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equatorial (South)</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>37.7</td>
<td>33.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S. Darfur</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>33.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahr Elghazel (South)</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>30.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Educational Statistics and Planning, Ministry of Education, Sudan

#### 2.1.5 Historical Development of the Educational System in Sudan

During the British colonial period, Southern Sudan and the North had significantly different educational systems. The North, which underwent assimilation in Arabic-Islamic culture for centuries, adopted the Arabic language as the medium of instruction in schools. In the South, the British left education up to missionary schools; however, these missionary schools, as most of the missionary schools in Africa, suffered from a lack of financial and human resources (Cowan, 1965: 5).

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\(^2\) Enrolment at a given level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the population in the theoretical school-age group corresponding to this level of education. For the tertiary level, the population used is the five-year age group following on from the secondary school theoretical leaving age.
The Juba conference of 1947, which was held to discuss the status of the South in the independent Sudan, recommended setting up a national curriculum with integrated content, as a way of achieving national unity. In 1949, the national assembly decided on the adoption of Arabic as the language of teaching in all educational levels. In 1954, Arabic replaced English and native languages as the medium of education in all schools in the South. In 1957, the Ministry of Education issued a decree outlawing all missionary schools in the South and putting them under the direct administration of the central government. After October 1964, the language of instruction in secondary schools was changed from English to Arabic. The 1970s witnessed a turning towards the Arab League and its Arab-Islamic ideology especially after the Egyptian-Israeli war. This manifested clearly in the content of the curriculum of general education particularly with primary education. This was attributed to keeping pace with the declared nationalistic goals (Selman et al, 2003).

2.1.5.2 Curriculum Development History:

The Sudanese primary school curriculum has undergone many changes since independence. Education in general and the curriculum in particular has been the subject of political interference in Sudan. There were four national conferences and all of them followed significant changes in the political situation in the country.

The first conference was the National Education Conference (1969). This conference followed the Numeiri military coup, which seized power from the second democratic government in May 1969. The main conference recommendations were linking the curriculum content with the students’ environment and highlighting the Arab-
African association in shaping Sudanese identity. The second conference took place in 1984, after the declaration of Sharia as the supreme law of the country. This period was characterized by the government’s inclination towards the Arab Muslim World. This was clear in the conference recommendations that emphasized redesigning curriculum according to the Islamic orientation and developing pre-school curriculum for kindergarten and Khalawi (Islamic religious schools).

After the overthrow of the Numeiri regime in the popular uprising of April 1985, elites sought to reflect the new democratic era in the curriculum. Consequently, the 1987 conference took place. The conference recommendations reflected the discourse about national unity. The conference called for setting a national curriculum with an integrated content and activities seeking to achieve national unity as well as developing textbooks with diversified contents, to suit the students’ local surroundings. The language policy took a central place in that conference. The conference recommended developing the teaching of languages, especially Arabic language (Selman, 1990, p. 133-134). (See appendix B for complete conference recommendations)

2.1.5.2 The Conference on the Policies of Education and Institutions (1990)

For the purpose of this study, this is the most significant conference. The curriculum under analysis in this research was designed according to the recommendations of the 1990 conference. This conference took place after the takeover of the government following a military coup lead by Omer Elbashir. The conference resolutions are apparent reflections of the new government's orientation and philosophy
towards education and the role of education in national development. The most significant contribution the conference made to the history of curriculum development in Sudan is setting the Aims of Education. These aims are:

a) To work for the consolidation of religious belief in young people, socializing them accordingly, building their individual and collective behavior in the light of the teachings of religion, in a way which may help in the formation of social, economic and political values which are based on the proper behavior which is based on the teachings of Heavens.

b) The strengthening of the spirit of national unity amongst young people, the promotion of their feelings of loyalty and love of their home and to everything contributing to its development.

c) Building a self-dependent society, the utilization of the spiritual and material capabilities inherent in the country and the diffusion of ambition to retrieve our cultural role as a pioneer nation with a mission.

d) The development of individual capacities and skills and the availing of the chances of training in the modern technological techniques, in a way which enables individuals to utilize their potentials in the service of comprehensive development.

e) The development of environmental sense in young people and enlightening them that the components of the environment are a blessing from God; and therefore must be preserved, developed and well utilized; so as to avoid drought, desertification and other environmental disasters (Educational policies conference
From the recommendations of the different educational conferences, three of them in a span of six years, there have been repeated changes in the educational system in Sudan. During the 1984, 1987 and 1990 educational conferences, the use of Arabic and Islam were accorded cardinal importance in the national curriculum. The 1984 conference sought to advance education based on an Islamic orientation as well as to entrenching the role of Khalawi. The 1987 conference gave Arabic a more prominent role in the educational system. Thereafter, this prominence was elevated even higher, with Arabic regarded as the holy language alongside Islam, the religion. It was stated in the Elements of Basic Education Curriculum (1990) that the “Arabic language is a holy language, being the Qur’an's tool to convey the Truth” (Curriculum Development Center, n.d.). The political system further advanced the Islamic agenda when during the 1990 conference, the consolidation of religious thought and the teachings of the heavens was called for. While these have not been explicitly defined, it is important to recognize that Sharia had already been unilaterally declared in Sudan. Accordingly, all the recommendations touching on religion implied the religion of Islam, while the mention of the "heavens" means heaven as defined and understood in Islam. All these steps are in keeping with the declared intention by Al Turabi, leader of the ruling party, who sought to revive the Islamic nation with Sudan at the forefront (The Islamic State, 1994; Al Mubarak, 2001). Education has therefore never been a neutral enterprise in Sudan. It has always been a tool of religious, social and cultural domination by Northern dominated political regimes and Islamic zealots.
2.2 Education and Social Cohesion/Division

The previous section outlines the historical background of Sudan’s conflict as well as the history of the educational system development. Since this research aims at understanding the role of education in Sudan's nation building, the following section explores the intellectual discourse on education and social cohesion, the relationship between education and power, and the role of education in social identity construction. The review of the literature provides a theoretical framework for understanding how the representation of ethnicity, history and religion in Sudan’s basic education curriculum affects the current social conflict.

2.2.1 Two Faces of Education

Education has been valued by many scholars as a fundamental tool in human development, both economically and socially. However, education can be used as tool of hegemony and oppression.

Education is needed to ensure sustainable economic and social development. Besides training the workforce, education is important for nation building, health, governance and many other aspects. Rapid technological progress in a broad range of areas has made education a necessity for all citizens. In less developed countries, like Sudan, this necessity, combined with rapid population growth, has greatly increased the demand for education.

Education plays a central role in the economic development of a country. Economic development does not only refer to a rise in per capita income, but includes...
improvement in quality of life, reduction in poverty, and fundamental changes in the structures of the economy. Developmental economists generally support the positive association between investment in education and economic returns for individuals and nations (Todaro, 2000). On a micro level, it has been proved that the higher the education level the greater the income one can earn, and the higher the chances of employment resulting in high association between education and quality of life improvement. On a macro level, development in both public and private sectors depends on skilled labor. Skilled labor results in high productivity, which consequently increases the rates of output growth.

Further, there exists abundant evidence that bridging the gender gap in education is economically desirable (Todaro, 2000). According to UNDP (2003) “If the countries of South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North Africa had closed the gender gap in schooling between 1960 and 1992 as quickly as East Asia did, their income per capita could have grown by an additional 0.5-0.9 percentage point per year. In Africa, this would have meant close to a doubling of per capita income growth.” Expanding females’ education increases women’s productivity, improves child health and nutrition, and contributes to poverty reduction (Todaro, 2000).

Educational institutions, as well as political, social and economic organizations, are considered as four pillars that – if operating consistently – will support social cohesion and development (Heyneman, 2003). Education “can shape the understandings, attitudes, and ultimately the behavior of individuals” (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000:9). Schools and educational institutions can perform essential functions in promoting social cohesion, by being places of socialization for different groups from varied backgrounds. Ideally,
schools facilitate tolerance as well as respect of differences. Schools also perform as enterprises for the teaching of citizenship and tolerance and respect of rule of law through arbitrating disagreements and attempting to integrate different objectives of many different groups. Thus, schools broaden students’ understandings of complex historical and global issues (Heyneman, 2003; Feinberg, 1998, Green, 1999).

However, education is not a neutral venture. It is a dynamic process that is always rooted in a socio-cultural context. It can be thought of as a contested terrain since educational content, curriculum development and structure, governance of school and classroom, school funding, classroom discourse, and many other factors, contribute to shaping the educational process outcome (Shor, 1992, Mayo, 1999). Consequently, education, as Bush and Saltarelli (2000) stated, has two faces. On the one hand, education can be an enterprise of social cohesion, democracy and development. On the other hand, it can be a catalyst of violence, social division and conflict (Apple, 1990, 1991; Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Shor, 1992; Tawil & Harley, 2004; Graham-Brown, 1994) and “an education system that reinforces social fissures can represent a dangerous source of conflict” (Tawil & Harley, 2004). Recently, significant attention has been paid internationally towards the role of education as a catalyst of conflict by amplifying social divisions and reproducing prejudices that fissure the society and lead to outbreaks of violence. The examples of Bosnia, Guatemala, Lebanon, Mozambique, Sri Lanka and Rwanda (Tawil & Sobhi, 2004) provide insightful data on the role of curriculum in fostering social divisions and prejudices in war-torn societies, such as Sudan. From the above, it becomes apparent that education can be used for either good purposes or bad ends. This study seeks to investigate the nature of basic education in Sudan and the
possible implications it has had on the polarization and conflict that has characterized the Sudan.

2.2.2 Education and Hegemony

Educational theorists increasingly focus on the role of education in promoting dominant ideologies or reproducing the conditions that serve dominant groups’ interests. The fact that educational institutions and schools are the main spaces of producing and diffusing what is considered as official knowledge links education to issues of power. Whose knowledge is considered legitimate? An answer to this question reveals that education is not a neutral venture and “the struggle to control knowledge”, as Gordy (1995) puts it, “is a struggle over power” (p. 195)

The relationship between education and political power and the values and beliefs disseminated through the educational system can be connected to the discourse on hegemony. The political and social theorist Antonio Gramsci is one of the prominent philosophers whose theory centered on the concept of hegemony. Hegemony has been seen by Gramsci as “a social condition in which all aspects of social reality are dominated by or supportive of a single class” (Mayo, 1999: 35). While Marxists argue that the ruling class imposes its control through ownership of means of productions, Gramsci underscores the role of social institutions such as education, media, religion and so forth as means of production of meanings and values to impose ruling dominant groups’ values, beliefs and interests and frame reality in a way that serves their interest (William, 2004; Carragee, 2004; Mayo, 1999; Joll, 1978; Femia, 1987; Apple, 1996). For Gramsci, social control takes two forms: external controls, through using force,
punishments and rewards; and internal forms through slow reform of the masse consciousness. The latter is known as *hegemony*. Thus, for Gramsci the hegemony of a certain group meant that the group “had succeeded in persuading the other classes of society to accept its own moral, political and cultural values” (Joll, 1978: 129). It follows that, as Femia stated, “hegemony is the predominance obtained by consent rather than force of one class or group over the other classes” (Femia, 1987: 24). Sudan presents a case where both force and false consciousness have been applied by the dominant group. The country is considered by the ruling elites as an Islamic-Arab state, which a belief shared by the majority but not all Sudanese. Sudan’s membership in the Arab League is another manifestation of how the ruling class has defined Sudan, in spite of the country’s racial diversity. The conflict that has been going on in Sudan indicated the application of violence to enforce the values of the dominant group, and the counter resistance of the dominated groups.

Hegemony through reforming consciousness takes place in all societal institutions. Apple emphasizes the importance of social institutions such as schools, media and religious organizations in advancing dominant groups' hegemonic agenda by contributing to the masses’ consciousness reformation. Apple explains that “institutions of cultural preservation and distribution like schools create and recreate forms of consciousness that enable social control to be maintained without the necessity of dominant groups having to resort to overt mechanisms of domination” (Apple, 1990: 3). By investigating Sudan's national basic education curriculum, this research seeks to understand how the educational system is used to construct and redefine Sudanese national identity, in accordance with the dominant group’s symbols and values.
Hegemony, as seen by Gramsci, is not only about “domination,” but also “leadership.” According to Femia (1987): “Domination is realized, essentially, through the coercive machinery of the state, [while] ‘intellectual and moral leadership’ is objectified in, and mainly exercised through, ‘civil society’, the ensemble of education, religious and associational institutions” (p. 24). Hegemony, then, is the attempt of dominant groups to make their knowledge, values, and beliefs the common set of values and beliefs in a given society. According to Fontana,

A social group or class can be said to assume a hegemonic role to the extent that it articulates and proliferates throughout society’s cultural and ideological belief system whose teachings are accepted as universally valid by the general population. Ideology, culture, philosophy and their “organizers” – the intellectuals – are thus intrinsic to the notion of hegemony. (Fontana, 1993: 141)

The state plays an essential role in expanding the cultural and social hegemony by standardizing the dominant groups’ set of values. As articulated by Marx “the class which is ruling material force in the society is the same time its ruling intellectual force” (cited in Durham et al, 2001:39 [italics in the original]). Through state regulations and cultural policies, the state defines what culture, ideology and knowledge is to be considered legitimate and standard. It is apparent that “the decision to define some groups’ knowledge as the most legitimate, as official knowledge, while other groups’ knowledge hardly sees the light of day, says something extremely important about who has power in society” (Apple, 1996:22). Ultimately, the state defines what should be considered as official knowledge or common culture, depending on who dominates the state apparatus.
Stave-Hagen (1991) points out how the tendency to develop a national cultural identity is often a state-inspired and state-controlled objective: “Thus culture, through cultural policies, becomes an instrument of national ideology. Sometimes such instrumentalization of culture reaches extreme forms, as when governments, through their cultural policies, decide which are the ‘good’ or ‘bad’ or the ‘positive’ and ‘negative,’ or the ‘progressive’ and ‘regressive’” (p.154). Through the state, dominant groups’ values are imposed and official knowledge is defined. Golding (1992) explained how state and ruling groups work to create hegemonic coalitions:

In this context, hegemony tended to take as a direct point of reference an already formed, cohesively inscribed group that was either dominant or sought to be so. It tended to mean, moreover the ability of that group to create coalitions or allies of perhaps different - but like-minded – groups (also cohesively inscribed), the latter of which, in consenting be a part of that coalition or power bloc, would agree either tactically or explicitly to being “led” by the leading force within it. The power bloc or ruling group would, in turn, be dominated over those groups excluded from that bloc in power.” (p.107)

However, as Apple (1982) argues, “hegemony isn’t an already accomplished social fact, but a process in which dominant groups and classes manage to win the active consensus over whom they rule” (p. 29). Apple goes further and explains how education, being controlled by the state, plays a significant role in creating such an active consensus. Many scholars explain how education is used by authorities as a key tool of domination. Graham-Brown (1994) points out how cultural assumptions, “which are irrelevant or
antipathetic to minority groups’ needs and understanding of the world, may be built into the curriculum by the state” (Graham-Brown, 1994: 27). The state in Sudan has declared Arabic as the national language and medium of instruction for Sudan. Bush & Saltarelli (2000) point out how dominant groups use the education as a means of reproducing the status quo and imposing their control and hegemony:

In ethnically stratified societies, privileged ethnic groups usually attain higher average educational levels than members of subordinate ethnic groups. Several factors underlie this pattern. First, educational attainment is enhanced by a privileged background, and students from advantaged ethnic origins benefit from the educational, occupational and economic attainments of their parents. Second, dominant social groups use the educational system to secure their privilege across generations. Because of their cultural and political domination, educational selection is based on criteria that favor their offspring. Third, dominant ethnic groups may control the political processes by which school systems are funded and structured and are able to promote those schools attended by their children or their own educational districts. As a result of these factors, students from advantaged social origins do better in school and obtain more schooling which, in turn, enables them to obtain more desirable occupations (p.9)

Schools, accordingly, “help maintain privilege in cultural ways by taking the form and content of the culture and knowledge of powerful groups and define it as legitimate knowledge to be preserved and passed,” states Apple (Apple, 1982: 41). Apple (1982)
further discusses the role schools play in the creation and recreation of an effective dominant culture; he asserts that schools “teach norms, values, dispositions, and culture that contribute to the ideological hegemony of dominant groups” (Apple, 1982:41-42). Since the knowledge that is produced through schools is selected from a much larger pool of knowledge, “what counts as legitimate knowledge is the result of the complex power relations and struggle among identifiable class, race, gender/sex, and religious groups” (Apple, 1991:2). Similarly, “the labeling of members of ethnic groups along stereotypical lines, for example, is usually linked to the maintenance of a power imbalances between the minority (or minorities) and an ethnic majority” (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000:2). Usually, is materialized in the curriculum and be disseminated through the education systems as the ultimate official knowledge reflects opinions and values of the dominant group.

2.2.3 Self-Identity and Othering: Alienation or Assimilation

In the “Images of ‘the Other’: ‘the Turk’ in Greek Cypriot children's imaginations” Spyrou (2002) points out how “in ethnically divided societies ... nationalism, especially as it manifests itself through the educational system, plays a key role in defining a political sense of ‘self’ in relation to ‘others’ ” (p. 56). Identity formation has been of interest to many scholars. From early childhood, people start forming their identity. Belonging to a certain group is one of the most fundamental components of one’s identity. The literature on social identity proposes that social identity is the individual’s self-concept derived from perceived membership in a social group (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002; Lewin, 1948). The social identity theory of Tajfel & Turner (1982) provides a theoretical framework for the formation of a mechanism of
social identification. According to social identity theory, people tend to place themselves in social organizations such as ethnic groups, religious affiliations. This identification provides individuals with a sense of belongingness (Ashforth et al, 1998; Phinney, 1990) However, social identity is not a distinctive attribute; rather it is acquired and influenced by different social institutions such as family, education, religious institutions and age groups. Still, as declared by Spyrou (2002) and emphasized by Hengst (1997), collective identity “is based on the construction of differences and equality…membership in a particular (social) collective is experienced particularly clearly through the perception of such differences” (p. 43). Harold (1997) explains self-identity development further by stating that: “For a person to develop a self-identity, he or she must generate discourses of both differences and similarities and must reject and embrace specific identities” (p. 4 [italics in the original]). The process of labeling and identifying those who are different from oneself has been defined by many scholars as a process of Othering.

A growing body of literature has dealt with the Othering concept. Johnson (2004) defines Othering as “a process that identifies those that are thought to be different from oneself or mainstream” (p. 253). According to Holliday (2004), “the foreign Other …refers not only to different nationalities, but also to any group of people perceived as different – perhaps in terms of so-called ethnicity, religion, political alignment, class or caste, or gender” (p. 23). Yet, according to Charon (1992): “it is through others that we come to see and define self, and it is our ability to role take that allows us to see ourselves through others” (p.107). Todorvo (1982) identifies three dimensions of relationship between Self and Other: a) value judgment (Other may be
perceived good or bad, equal or inferior), b) social distance c) Knowledge (to what extent Self knows about the Other’s history, culture and values system) (cited in Harold, 1997: 5). Othering, thus, is based on perceived differences. People tend to identify Others as those who are racially, religiously, or culturally different. Othering, as Canales (2000) states could take two forms: exclusionary and inclusionary. However, she asserts: “in the multicultural, feminist, and critical literature, the prevailing discourse presents Othering as a negative, exclusionary process with dire consequences. It was this exclusionary perspective that strongly influenced my perceptions of the Other and the Othering process” (p. 19).

The Otherness can be articulated by minorities and majorities, that is to say the politics of otherness is not related to politics of power. However, “the discourses of identity articulated by majority population are likely to be univocal and monologic because it is easy for dominant groups to express and confirm their shared identity publicly” (Harold, 1997:6). The literature provides many strategies that majority groups use to deal with minorities who are defined as “Others”, some of these are alienation and assimilation.

In alienation, the society is dichotomized into “We” and “They”. “The binary opposition of we/they becomes important here,” states Apple (1996), because always “We’ are law abiding, hard working, decent, virtuous, and homogenous. The ‘theys’ are very different. They are lazy, immoral, permissive, and heterogeneous…The ‘theys’ are undeserving.” (Apple, 1996: 7).

In this context, educational institutions, among others, plays an essential role in defining Us and Them. As important institution of socialization during formative years,
schools, shape both the character and worldview of students. The representation of *We* and *Others* through curriculum and daily interaction in schools is fundamental in children’s perceived identity construction. Extensive research has been carried out to study Othering in textbooks. Studies of textbooks of Lebanon, Egypt, Cyprus, Canada and the United States show that Other is defined according to difference. Other can be defined according to race (White/Black); country of origin (Native/Immigrant, Citizen/Foreigner), gender (male/female) or religion and sect (Muslim/Christian, Catholic/Protestant, Believer/Non-believer) (Farayha, 2004; Groiss, 2004; Spyrou, 2002; Safe Dei, 1997; Apple, 1991; Apple, 1996). Othering in Sudan assumes region of the country (Northerner/Southerner), religious affiliation (Muslim/Kafir) and race (Arab/African).

Minority groups face frequent attempts by authorities and dominant groups to be assimilated in the mainstream culture. As Steven-Hagen (1991) states, “governments, especially in the third world, feel that strengthening minority cultures may encumber promotion of ‘national culture and unity’” (p. 142). These attempts are utilized through manipulation of social institutions. In a situation where dominant groups seeks to create a *common culture*, explains Johnson (1990), “culture is thought of as a homogeneous way of life or tradition, not as a sphere of difference, relationships, or power. No recognition is given to the real diversity of social orientation and cultures within a given nation-state or people” (p. 71). As a result, the culture of the dominant group is superimposed on dominated groups, and the dominant prevails.

Educational institutions play an essential role in the assimilation process. Being one of the major sites of socialization, schools highly contribute to defining common
culture. Bush & Saltarelli highlight some of the ways in which education has been used in assimilation, “including the use and invention of a canon of ‘national literature’ and the promulgation of a common national language- two essential components in what has been called the ‘naturalization’ of citizens” (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000: 6). The case of Turkey is an apparent illustration of how assimilation policies can be advanced through social institutions. Turkey outlawed the use or promotion of any language other than Turkish (Steven-Hagen, 1996). These constitutional stipulations deprived thousands of the Kurdish minority group from using their language. Another example is the case of the Albanian minority in Kosovo, where the Serbian government adopted a policy of assimilation by eliminating teaching of Albanian language and introducing a unified curriculum throughout the country. As Bush & Saltarelli (2000) affirm: “there can be no doubt that the schism in education in Kosovo was a major contributor to the upsurge of violence that reached its horrifying in 1999” (p. 8).

In many countries, both in the developed and developing world “the school curriculum as well as language policy stresses national integration at the expenses of diversity” (Graham-Brown, 1994: 27). For schools, and other social institutions, to be sites of social development and cohesion, it is important that differences among individuals, who belong to the same society, are appreciated while seeking commonalities based on “shared knowledge and experiences amidst persisting valued differences related to group memberships” or what Dewey calls “unity of outlook upon a broader horizon” (Green, 1999:63-65).
2.2.4 Power of Textbooks

Textbooks are the educational instruments that carry the knowledge diffused through the educational process. Yet textbooks “are not simply ‘delivery systems’ of ‘facts’. They are at once the result of political, economic and cultural activities, battles and ceremonies” (Apple, 1991: 1-2). Curricula can influence the educational outcomes. The UNESCO meeting of Ministers of Education at the 44th session of the International Conference of Education (Geneva 1994) paid a great deal of attention to the role of curriculum in fostering human rights, democracy, and tolerant values, and accordingly social cohesion. It made a commitment to “pay special attention to improving curricula, the content of textbooks, and other educational materials including new technologies, with a view to educating caring and responsible citizens, open to other cultures, able to appreciate the value of freedom, respectful of human dignity and differences, and able to prevent conflicts or resolve them by non-violent means” (UNESCO, 1995).

The negative role of curriculum in reinforcing social division can be visible in different forms. Stereotyping in textbooks and labels that are attached to certain ethnic groups can highly affect the self-identity and self-image of children from those ethnic groups. Moreover, as Graham-Brown illustrates, the stereotyping can “ensure that the next generation of majority children perpetuate these views” (Graham-Brown, 1995: 28). Thus, education turns out to be a catalyst for social division instead of an agent for social cohesion. Since boundaries between classrooms and other societal institutions (family, religious organizations, and media) are permeable, children bring to classroom attitudes, values and behavior they acquire in these other institutions (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000).
Therefore any biases and discrimination in the curriculum emphasize whatever prejudices and negative attitudes children develop outside the classroom. Stereotypes and prejudices in textbooks provide children with a framework to reproduce racist ideology (Spyrou, 2002: 57). Belgian and German textbooks during colonization in Rwanda emphasized the physical appearance differences between Hutu and Tutsi and linked these differences to the Tutsi superiority over the Hutu (Stave-Hagen, 1996). This is a powerful illustration of how textbooks can be used to manipulate ethnic differences. Similar features were observed in the educational system in South Africa during Apartheid (Graham-Brown, 1991). The Eurocentric curriculum in North America and its exclusion of minorities’ history and culture has been a subject of intensive study by education scholars.

The battle over power and control of knowledge is centered on what and who is included and excluded in the textbooks (Apple, 1991). Sefa Dei (1997) in his study of African-Canadian perceptions about the official schools' curriculum illustrates how the exclusion of minority students from the curriculum results in disempowering the students, leading to disengaging them from the classroom. One student narrative in Safe Dei’s study implies how presence and absence in textbooks affects students’ self-perception and reception of the educational message. The student expressed her frustration of how all “those who have done something worth mentioning in the schoolbooks are white men” (p. 207). Through such exclusionist curricula, dominant groups in society attempt to impose their identity as a national identity through school textbooks. Johnson (1990) points out how in such situations “culture is thought of as a homogeneous way of life or tradition, not as a sphere of difference, relationships, or power. No recognition is given to
the real diversity of social orientation and cultures within a given nation-state or people. Yet a selective version of a national culture is installed as an absolute condition for any social identity at all.” He illustrates how oppressive such policies are, since “the ‘choices’ are between … a national culture or no culture at all” (Johnson, 1990:71). The underlying message is that the minorities have limited options either accepting the dominant group's culture, thereby giving in to assimilation, or being subjected to alienation. Often there is no middle ground.

In the context of Sudan’s educational systems, textbooks are the main source of information for students. Textbooks are often manipulated to advance political and hegemonic agenda. This research studies history, language and religion textbooks. Stereotyping, discrimination and isolation policies through exclusion of history, language and religion of minority groups have been an issue of interest for many scholars.

2.2.4.1 History

History is defined by Bush & Saltarelli as “a process of by which certain stories and events are highlighted while others are minimized or ignored” (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000: 12). Many educational scholars view textbooks as a key element in forming students' historical conceptions. Evans & Rosenzweig (1992) assert that: “the conceptual and narrative framework of a basic textbook becomes, for thousands of students, the primary lens through which they incorporate historical knowledge for the rest of their lives. That, in turn shapes their future capacities for active citizenship” (p. 1377). Ahonen’s (2001) study of the relationship between history textbooks and the national Estonian movement shows how political leaders evidently used school curriculum to
impose a version of history that served the dominant groups ideology. The study concludes that, “the purpose of the old Moscow-controlled curriculum had been to impose a Soviet identity on the Estonians. The All-Union identity was reinforced through the presentation of the Soviet Union as the Fatherland, and Estonia as ‘an ethnic territory’” (p. 181). Estonians called for a new version of history in which they demand “recognition of an Estonian ‘nation’” (Ahonen, 2001: 181). Zajda (2003) in his analysis of Russian history textbooks after the fall of the Soviet Union emphasizes how “central to the process of rewriting history is the notion of ideological repositioning – which involves the interplay of socialization, the hidden curriculum, and school or curricular knowledge in the production (or reproduction) of ‘legitimate culture’” (Zajda, 2003: 372). A further case of manipulating history to reproduce the elite ideology is the history textbooks in Israel. History textbooks excluded any Arabic literature that referred directly or indirectly to the Palestinian struggle and imposed an Israeli version of the history of the region and current conflict (Graham-Brown, 1994). It is evident that state policies tend to define the national history in favor of the dominant groups by constructing “a version of history, particularly of the recent past, which heightens the role of that group at the expenses of the others…Suppression of events or cultural ideas” (Graham-Brown, 1994: 28). Thus, history as a terrain of inclusion and exclusion, says a lot about who has the power of defining and shaping the national history.

2.2.4.2 Language

Language is an important component of the educational process. Through language people express themselves, transmit their history, cultural values and beliefs
from generation to generation, and form their identity. Curriculum can be used by the dominant group as a tool of cultural and linguistic oppression. Steven-Hagen (1990) defines ‘ethnocide’ as “the process whereby a culturally distinct people loses its identity as a result of policies designed to erode its land and resource base, the use of its language, its own social and political institutions, as well as its traditions, art forms, religious practices and cultural values” (cited in Bush & Saltarelli, 2000:10). A critical factor in determining how the educational system contributes to promotion of social cohesion is the issue of language. As Graham-Brown states, “minorities can be excluded from power and influence through lack of access to the language of power and government” (Graham-Brown, 1995: 27). Although it has been proved that the teaching of child’s first language is the best medium of learning, especially in early stages of learning, many states impose one language (normally the majority language) as the medium of instruction in schools (Grispin, 1994). The language of the dominant group can be imposed over minorities as a tool of assimilation as in the case of Sudanese educational system where Arabic is the official language of instruction in the entire educational system in spite of the country’s ethnic diversity.

2.2.4.3 Religion

Religion is a significant element in identity construction and historically plays an important role in the history of human kind. “Even in a society with many members who profess no religious faith and where secularism seems to be increasing, religion is an immensely important feature of social and cultural life” (Blair, 2005: 1). According to Kimball, “throughout history religious ideas and commitments have inspired individuals
and communities of faith to transcend narrow self-interest in pursuit of higher values and truths” (Kimball, 2003:1). However, religion has been a central factor in many bloody conflicts all over the world; Serbian Christians against Bosnian Muslims in Serbia, Muslims against Hindus in India, Palestinians Muslims against Israeli Jews, and so on. Some scholars argue, “what appears at one level as a religious conflict is at another level a conflict over political power, over the rhetoric and imagery of power, and for control of the popular imaginary” (Birman, 1999: 1). Because of its holy and sacred nature, religion is the most powerful tool in advancing hegemonic ideas. The manipulation of Islam as a tool of terrorism in September 11 is a case in point.

Religion, as history, language and culture, can be manipulated as a tool for hegemony and domination. Historically, many incidents prove that dominant and ruling group use power to advance their religious agenda and vice versa. In Sudan, for instance, the official education policy sought to advance education based on Islam and declaring Arabic as the official medium of instruction. Furthermore, Arabic language was declared as “a holy language, being the Qur’an's tool to convey the Truth” (Curriculum Development Center, nd). In Northern Ireland, officials made a provision to create inter-faith tolerance in schools by introducing world religions to religious education. Barnes (2002) in his study of this new policy of Northern Ireland concludes “that multi-faith religious education is the form of religious education best suited to overcoming racism and religious prejudice” (Barnes, 2002: 26). Taking into consideration the crucial role religion plays, especially in the African context, it is important for schools to promote tolerance and understanding, to advance interfaith dialogue. This could only be true if in
multi-religious societies, like Sudan, all religions are treated equally and given equal official support.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research employed two methodological approaches: thematic analysis and qualitative interviews. This chapter discusses the rationale for the methodology, sampling procedures and data collection procedure. The limitations of the study are also discussed.

The chapter is divided into two sections:

1. Section one deals with the textbook analysis. The section discusses the thematic analysis, the sampling procedure and developing of themes and codes and data collection procedure.

2. Section two deals with the qualitative interviews. The section discusses selection of interviewees and data collection procedure.

3.1 Research Design

UNICEF identifies three areas of curriculum: the intended curriculum, the taught curriculum, and the learned curriculum. Intended curriculum here refers to the “formal, approved guidelines for teaching content to pupils that is developed for teachers and/or by teachers” (UNICEF, 2005: 11). The taught curriculum is defined as the adopted curriculum and textbook information the teachers use in ways that will enable all students to learn. However, the actual students’ learning outcome is different from what is in the textbook and what the teachers teach. The actual learning outcome is known as the learned curriculum (UNICEF, 2000).

The research presented in this paper emphasizes the intended curriculum. The intended curriculum constitutes recommended textbooks, teachers’ guides and any other
materials officially approved by authorities. Recommended textbooks are the key instruments that carry the knowledge disseminated through the curriculum. As Gordy stated; “textbooks are a defining characteristic of curriculum in most schools” (Gordy, 1995: 196). For this reason, this research used textbooks officially approved by the Ministry of Education as the primary source of data. The research used thematic analysis to analyze the themes appearing in the approved textbooks. The research employed qualitative interviewing techniques to solicit information from key persons involved in developing the national primary schools curriculum in Sudan.

3.2 Thematic Analysis

According to Boyatzis (1998), thematic analysis is a process of encoding qualitative information. Thematic analysis allows for transformation of this qualitative information into quantitative data. A theme is a “pattern” that recurs in a specific text, and can be used to describe or interpret an aspect of the phenomena under study (Boyatzis, 1998; Roberts, 1997). Such recurrence of a pattern that may be described as a theme is usually noticeable.

Thematic analysis often involves “more or less judgment rather than precise numerical measurements... often measures such unintended text attributes as well as intended text subjects” (Roberts, 1997:36). Thematic analysis allows the researcher to use “manifest and latent content analysis at the same time” (Boyatzis, 1998: 16). Since the proposed research aims at studying hidden curriculum – messages that are communicated but not officially included in the formal curriculum, and that often serve to advance the
agendas of certain groups in society – as well as the intended curriculum, thematic analysis is therefore the most suitable methodology.

The use of thematic analysis involves three stages:

- Sampling
- Developing themes and codes
- Validation and applying the code (Boyatzis, 1998)

### 3.2.1 Limitations of Thematic Analysis

The main two limitations of thematic analysis are projection and isolation of text from its context. Projection can be thought of as “reading into or attributing to another person something that is your own characteristic, emotion, value, attitude or such” (Boyatzis, 1998: 13). Familiarity with the data or phenomena increases the risk of projection. Three techniques suggested by Boyatzis are going to be used in this research to limit or minimize projection: a) developing explicit code, b) establishing consistency of judgment, c) using different coders to encode the information (inter-coder reliability).

According to Roberts, thematic analysis has the risk of “violating the text” in the sense that it may isolate the text from its context. However, “text can be daunting and complex enough without considering additional issues in evaluating themes” (Roberts, 1997: 38). In this research, since textbooks are the main subject under study, and are prized as the principal educational instruments that carry out the knowledge diffused through the educational process, the themes that are identified through textual analysis are valuable enough and are capable of delivering useful information without considering any additional settings.
3.2.2 Sampling

The rationale for sampling using qualitative methods differs from that for quantitative methods. Samples are purposive rather than random and aim to select cases that will provide rich data (MacDougall, 2001:120).

3.2.2.1 Textbooks Sampling

- **Sample Frame**: Sudan National Primary School recommended textbooks for all subjects and all grades are the sample frame for this proposed research. Although some areas in Southern Sudan and Eastern Sudan (liberated areas) use different curriculum, this research deals only with the official national curriculum as the sample frame.

- **Sampling Procedure**: According to Bernard (1999), purposive sampling can be used to study critical cases. In this research, a purposive sampling is used to select grades and subjects from the total population of the sample frame.

3.2.2.2 Grades Sampling

Basic education in Sudan is divided into three circles: the first circle from first to the third grade, the second circle from the fourth to the sixth grade, the third circle from the seventh to the eighth grade (Selman, 2003). The research will select the first, fourth and sixth grades which are the starting points of each of the three circles. The eighth grade, which forms the completion of the primary education stage, will be considered as well.
3.2.2.3 Subjects' Sampling

The Sudan National School Curriculum is divided into five modules: religion, language, mathematics, man and the universe, and applied art. Religion is a crucial factor in Sudan and the animosity that has characterized the different communities in Sudan has a religious dimension (Lesch, 1998). Further, Sudanese society is highly religious and religious literature is valued above all other books. According to Stave-Hagen (1996), “languages are related to thought processes and to the way the members of a certain linguistic group perceive nature, the universe and society” (Stave-Hagen (1996), cited in Bush & Saltarelli, 2000:11). Thus, language is another essential element in the curriculum, and promotes either social integration or disintegration. Graham-Brown points out how history can be manipulated and “constructed” to serve the interests of one group at the expense of another by suppression, distortion, or exclusion of certain events and cultural ideas (Graham-Brown, 1994). As Bush and Saltarelli state, “it was then a small step from exclusion to dehumanization to extermination” (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000:12). Taking into consideration the importance of religion, language and history in shaping children’s views about the world and others, the research proposes the study of the following axis:

- The religion axis (Islamic).
- The language axis (Arabic).
- Man and the Universe Axis, which includes hygiene, population, history, geography, and sociological sciences.
**Unit of Analysis**: Neuendorf (2002) defines the unit of analysis as “the element on which each variable is measured” (p.1). For the purpose of this study, the unit of analysis is defined physically in terms of its boundaries. Lessons will be the unit of analysis.

### 3.2.3 Developing Themes and Codes

There are three different ways to develop a thematic code:

- Theory driven
- Prior data or prior research driven
- Inductive or data driven (Boyatzis, 1998)

The research used inductive or data driven coding. In order to develop a thematic code sub-samples were selected and the following aspects are looked at according to the coding book attached in appendix (A):

- Main Theme: religious or secular
- Tolerance: promotion of coexistence or division:
- Ethnic Representation: Through subject identity analysis via name, religion and role played as portrayed in the text.
- Historical Event: Through analyzing location and main historical heroes in the text

### 3.3 Qualitative Interviews

Qualitative research methodology has become an increasingly important mode of inquiry. Qualitative research is defined as a study of a given phenomenon in its natural
setting (Marshal, 1995; Rubin, 1995; Patton, 1980). According to Marshal (1995) qualitative methods can be used when the research seeks to explore where and why policy are at odds, as well as exploring the real, as opposed to stated, organizational goals (Marshal, 1995: 43).

Interviewing has been described as, “a conversation with a purpose” (MacDougall, 2001:120). The purpose of qualitative interviewing is to gain better and deeper understanding of the interviewee’s thoughts, opinions, experience, and perspectives. The implication here “is to find out what is in one else's mind” (Patton, 1980:196). Patton (1980) categorizes interviews into three general types: the informal conversational interview, the general interview guide approach, and the standardized open-ended interview. Marshall (1995) provides more detailed categorization of interviews including ethnographic interviewing, phenomenological interviewing, elite interviewing and focus group interviewing. This research used an “interview guide” approach as well as “elite interviewing” approach.

### 3.3.1 Interview Guide

Patton (1980) describes an interview guide as “a list of questions or issues that is to be explored in the course of the interview….is prepared in order to make sure that basically the same information is obtained from a number of people by covering the same material” (Patton (1980): 200). The interview guide approach is used in this research because it allows for systematic inquiry, but in a flexible way at the same time. It “keeps the interaction focused, but allows individual perspectives and experiences to emerge”
(Patton (1980): 201). The interview guide that is used in this research (see appendix B) seeks answers to the research questions from different categories of interviewees.

3.3.2 Interviewees Selection

Elite interviewing is a specialized type of interviewing that focuses on the elites who are considered knowledgeable, influential or prominent, and are selected based on their expertise of the area under study (Marshall, 1995). The National Center of Curriculum and Educational Research is the department of the Sudanese Ministry of Education in charge of curricula development and evaluation. The research assumes the key persons in the Center are experts in curriculum development and therefore three of them are interviewed. In order to avoid the danger of getting only the official and partisan perspectives, the research sought to interview other educators and activists who may have a different perspective. Five teachers, an education scholar and a peace activist were interviewed. Three informal interviews took place with one teacher and two parents (male and female). Because this research sought to understand the role of education in social cohesion, ethnic and religious representation played a fundamental role in interviewee’s selection. Out of 13 interviewees, five are from the southern part of the country.
3.4 Data Collection procedure

3.4.1 Thematic Analysis

Textbook selection in the Sudanese educational system is centralized. The National Center of Curriculum Development and Educational Research is authorized to develop textbooks for general education including primary and secondary education. Although the Ministry of Education has its own printing presses, textbooks are sometimes published by commercial press. Thus, textbooks are available either through the Ministry of Education press or from outside libraries. The researcher bought the textbooks from a commercial provider in the city of Khartoum. However, Christian textbooks were not available even in the Curriculum Development center.

A sub-sample was used from each textbook under study using a systematic sampling approach. One lesson out 15 was used to develop the themes using the coding book. After themes were recognized by the researcher, two coders were asked to develop their own themes separately from the same sub-sample. One coder is a teacher and the other is an activist. A discussion followed each coding session and consensus about the themes was achieved. The coding book was revised according to the discussion with the inter-coders. A full sample then was analyzed and themes were recognized and analyzed.

3.4.2 Qualitative Interviews

The interviewees were divided into two categories: policy makers and practitioners. As mentioned earlier, curriculum development and evaluation is the responsibility of the National Center of Curriculum Development and Educational Research. Thus, the Center
officials are considered the policy makers. The Ministry of Education was the starting point of inquiry; from there the researcher was directed to the Curriculum Development Center coordination office in Khartoum. The researcher met with five officials and set appointments with three for formal interviews. The two interviews took place on two separate days. The researcher was informed that the Center’s headquarter is in Bakht El Rida University, Elduim City. The researcher contacted the officials there and set another appointment. The researcher traveled to Elduim and interviewed one official. Official documents and conference resolutions were collected during this visit as well. It is worth noting here that the researcher did not have full control of interviewee selection as they were assigned to her by the center director.

To avoid having only the official point of view on the subject under research, the researcher sought to interview teachers and education scholars. Two appointments were set with two education scholars but only one was successful. Two interviews with peace education activists were conducted. Four teachers from an Internally Displaced Persons school (mainly from south Sudan) were interviewed.

All interviews were audio taped and transcribed while in the field. Interviews were translated in the United States and the translations were used in the analysis.

3.5 Limitations of the Study

Several limitations faced the researcher:

- Availability of Christian textbooks: The research proposed studying the religion axis including Islamic and Christian textbooks; however, Christian textbooks are unavailable even in the Curriculum Development Center. The researcher was
advised to contact commercial dealers but only sixth and eighth grade textbooks were available. Accordingly, the religion axis analysis is limited to Islamic textbooks.

- **Budget and time constraints:** The research proposed conducting interviews in different parts of the country, especially the southern and western region. However, lack of funding limited the research to Khartoum State, White Nile State and Gezira State. To avoid getting only the Northerners' point of view about the issue of education and conflict, the research sought to interview Southerners who live in the North as indicated in chapter four.

- **Gender identity constraints:** being a female limited the researcher’s mobility. The researcher was unable to travel freely without prior arrangements for accommodation with relatives or friends. In some cases, the researcher had to conduct two trips to the same place, as she was unable stay overnight due to social restrictions.

- **Location:** Being an insider, it was difficult for the researcher to detach herself from the data. Thus, the researcher should be aware of her positionality and she made a conscious attempt to be objective in analysis and presentation.
4.1 Introduction

As stated in Chapter 1, the research presented here seeks to investigate the themes that appear in basic schools' curriculum in Sudan. The research seeks to answer the following research questions:

- Which themes are emphasized in the primary school textbooks?
- How often does the representation of the different ethnic groups occur and how are they represented?
- Which religions are represented in the primary school curriculum and how are they represented?
- Which historical events are emphasized and how are they represented?
- Which languages are emphasized in the primary school curriculum?
- What images are associated with minorities (Non-Arab, Non-Muslims) in the primary school curriculum?

By studying the themes and representation, the research aims to investigate the degree to which the curriculum fosters tolerance, social cohesion and peaceful coexistence or perpetuates violence and division. Ultimately, the research attempts to investigate the role of the education system in promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence between different ethnic groups in Sudan. For this purpose, the research employed two methodological approaches: thematic analysis of textbooks and qualitative interviews. The research employed thematic analysis to analyze the themes appearing in the Sudanese basic education curriculum. Recommended textbooks that are officially
approved by the Ministry of Education, as the primary source of data, were analyzed. The research employed qualitative interviewing techniques to solicit information from the key persons involved in developing the national primary schools curriculum.

This chapter is divided into two sections: Section 1 presents the findings from the textbooks analysis; Section 2 is devoted to the qualitative interviews narrative. The first section is organized according to the research questions posed in Chapter 1. It first reports the themes found in the textbooks, then the representation.

4.2 Textbooks Analysis

4.2.1 Themes

Considering the first research question, the analysis of textbooks reveals many themes throughout each book. However, six themes emerge prominently. These are patriotism, resolving conflict through violent means, collectivism and cooperation, family values, environmental conservation, and discipline and compliance, which are discussed below. I need to mention that the themes are overlapping that is why no breakdown of the percentage of occurrences is provided.

4.2.1.1 Patriotism

Patriotism is an “affective attachment towards the in-group implying feelings of belongingness, responsibility and pride... it is the desire to belong to a group that is valued positively” (Mummendey 2001: 160). As a theme, patriotism appears frequently in the textbooks analyzed. Sudan as a state and as a nation is portrayed in a positive light all through the books. The books encouraged a sense of pride as citizens of Sudan. The
country is described as “the world's paradise” (Fourth grade Arabic textbook, p.221). Working for the common good and for the country’s prosperity is valued as an attribute of a good citizen. In the fourth grade Arabic language textbook, the poem “The Trees of My Country” indicates that an attachment to the country is highly valued and the country and its trees are seen positively:

Since my childhood I loved the trees, I loved the victorious nation, for its love I recite poetry, I guard it in the day and in the night, I draw it in the art lessons, I am happy about it and sing my praise of it. (p.32)

The theme of patriotism complements one of the declared aims of education according to the 1990 conference, which states the curriculum aims at “the strengthening of the spirit of national unity amongst youngsters, the promotion of their feelings of loyalty and love to their homeland and to everything for its development” (The Conference on the Policies of Education and Institutions, 1990). However, it is worth noting that the “homeland”, which refers to Sudan, is defined as an Islamic-Arabic state according to symbols portraying Arabic-Islamic values. One of the lessons in the fourth grade’s Arabic textbook refers to Osman Dighna, one of the national leaders in the Mahdiya revolution during the struggle against colonialism. This war is summarized as a holy war (jihad). An exercise on the “national poem” in the sixth grade Arabic textbook states: “People shout takbeer [God is great] and tahleel\(^3\) [no god but Almighty God] as they rejoice over Independence” (p. 19). Such statements underline the assumption that “people” in the mind of curriculum developers are equivalent to Muslims who have secured their political independence through God as conceptualized in Islam. In the same

\(^3\) Tahleel and Takbeer are Islamic traditions, they refer to the shouting of “God is great” and “No god but the almighty God”
textbook, another statement is made to establish a link between a victorious nation and Jihad (holy war): “The nation will never be defeated if Jihad will enliven” (p.37). The implication here is that Sudan is an Islamic nation, for only an Islamic nation can carry on Jihad. Patriotism is thus equated to commitment not so much to a country, but more to Islam, for it is the latter through Jihad, which guarantees victory to the former. Patriotism is exemplified by involvement in Jihad - violent conquest in the name of Islam. In page 42 from the same textbook, the authors define "us" according to Islamic values. Declaring “our” principles, they state that:

“Allah is our goal. Is there any greater goal than God’s affection?
Our leader is the prophet, and we do not have any other than the prophet Mohamed
Quran is our constitution. It is holy. Justice, and all justice is in the Quran
Our way is jihad; if it is lost, our nation will be lost
I swear I will never leave my goal. As long as I carry my holy book [Quran] and my gun” (p.42)

One of the few examples of the portrayal of a multiethnic and multi-religious Sudan is in the eighth grade Man and Environment textbook. However, at the end of the book it is clearly stated that Sudan is at the forefront of the Islamic Nation in its mission to revive the lost civilization of the Islamic Empire (p.110)

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4 Islamic notion of God
4.2.1.2 Resolving Conflict Through Violence

There are many ways to resolve conflict. However, the textbooks under study persistently advocate violent acts as the means to resolve conflict. In the fourth grade Arabic textbook, there are thirteen lessons out of fifty-three in which war appears as the main theme. In this textbook, war and violence are encouraged as acts of bravery and heroism:

I am a brave fighter

Knowledge increased my ambitions

I have no fear when it comes to defending my homeland

My flowing song is the tank and the gun

Shout loudly: welcome death (p.47) (see Fig 4-1)

Figure 4-1: Resolving Conflict through Violence Theme- Example from 4th Grade Arabic Book
War is also exalted as part of the Islamic history as in lessons of Badr battle\(^5\) (p.36, p.42), Uhud battle\(^6\) (p.83), or as a national history (p.121). War and violence are considered holy and are associated with faith in many incidents throughout the text:

- God is great, greater than enemies are
- God is the best supporter for the oppressed
- I, with my faith and my weapon, will rescue my motherland
- And the light of Truth will be with me (Fourth grade Arabic book: 135)

War is presented as a sacred duty, which receives divine reward: “You know what excellent rewards Allah prepares for Muslims for fighting Kufar [non-Muslims]” (Sixth grade Arabic book: 14). In the same textbook students are asked to write an essay on how to support the Sudanese government army in its *war*, referring to the civil conflict in the country. These textbooks are used to legitimize the conflict and present it as a national war (p.139).

History textbooks are the “primary lens through which they [students] incorporate historical knowledge for the rest of their lives. That, in turn, shapes their future capacities for active citizenship” (Evans & Rosenzweig, 1991:1377). The selection of history narratives in Man and Environment textbook, makes the war theme more prominent. In the eighth grade Man and Environment textbook, three out of four chapters deal mainly with the history of wars. The first chapter is about the Islamic world and Europe and it deals with what are referred to as “Christian wars.” These are wars between the Islamic empire and the Roman Empire in the eleventh century. The second chapter is about colonization and World Wars I and II. Although the third chapter is about

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\(^5\) A battle between Muslims and Non-Muslims during the life of prophet of Islam

\(^6\) A battle between Muslims and Non-Muslims during the life of prophet of Islam
modern Sudan and its independence, the war theme appears constantly. In this chapter, the struggle against colonization is represented as an Islamic struggle against Christian colonizers: “religion [Islam] was a key factor that inspired Sudanese to declare jihad [holy war] against Turk-Egyptian colonizers” (p.55); “reasons of Mahdiya revolution were… work of Christian missionaries who enjoyed the ruler’s [colonialists] support” (P.55); “reasons of success of Mahdiya revolution were … Muslims' dissatisfaction because of the work of missionaries among Muslims and animist communities” (p.56). Ironically, the Turks of the Ottoman Empire as well as the Egyptians are all Muslims. It is not clear why the passage refers to the two as Christian colonizers, and the revolt against them as fighting Christians.

4.2.1.3 Collectivism and Cooperation

The Sudanese community is a collective society. "Sudan, the extended family provided social services. Traditionally, the family was responsible for the old, the sick, and the mentally ill, although many of these responsibilities had been eroded by urbanization” (Library of Congress, 2005). The theme of portraying Sudan as a collective society and encouraging collectivism among students is apparent in the frequent use of the pronoun “We”: “We go to school” (First grade Arabic book: 102), “We clean” (First grade Arabic book: 120),”We pray” (First grade Arabic book: 134, 139). Using positive examples of cooperation and collectivism, like the collective nature of bees, is another manifestation of this theme (Fourth grade Arabic book: 111). In Islamic religion textbooks, the importance of maintaining strong social networks is stressed as one of the
significant rules of Islam (Sixth grade Islamic religion book: 37) as well as collaboration and cooperation (p.84).

The theme of collective identity, especially in religion textbooks, is presented as solely Islamic collective identity. Consequently, the concepts of brotherhood/sisterhood are limited to Muslims, rather than embracing the whole of humanity. For example, in the “Islamic Brotherhood Poem,” the call is to those who share the Islamic faith (Eighth grade Islamic religion book: 37). In the same textbook, it is made clear that “it is not allowed for a Muslim to treat another Muslim badly” (p.34). Being kind and good treatment is exclusively for Muslims. By implication, hostility can be allowed or is permissible against others.

4.2.1.4 Family Values

As mentioned before, Sudanese society is a collectivistic society. The family, both nuclear and extended, plays a significant role in the social network. Thus, it is not surprising that it appears as one of the main themes in the textbooks under study. In the first grade Arabic book, the first lesson is about family, and it is a constant theme through the book. The book has five central characters that represent a family. Parents are valued and children are exhorted in the fourth grade Arabic book (p.89) to obey their parents. However, it is worth noting that respect for parents in this book is associated with Islamic faith. Quran and Hadith are the authorities that the authors use repeatedly to support their argument: “Because parents’ rights are very important, Allah mentioned it [in His holy book] immediately after Allah’s rights” (Fourth grade Arabic book: 90). In the fourth grade Man and Environment book the family is considered as a “holy entity and has great
importance in human lives” (p.116). Although the family concept in this book is still tied to religion, but, contradictory to the fourth grade Arabic book, the fourth grade, Man and Environment, book tries to balance religious representation by citing the Bible alongside the Quran. However, citing of the Bible is very rare in the textbooks, and it is done only as add-ons more than in a way to bring equal representation of the religions in Sudan.

4.2.1.5 Environmental Conservation

Environmental degradation has been an issue of interest globally. Sudan suffers from desertification, which has led to many crises that affect human life such as droughts, famines, displacement and loss of livestock.

The environmental protection theme is synchronized with the declared educational aims of the 1990 conference, which emphasized:

…the development of an environmental sense in the young people and enlightening them that the components of the environment are a blessing from God; and therefore must be conserved, developed and well-utilized, in order to avoid drought, desertification and other environmental disasters. (The Conference on the Policies of Education and Institutions, 1990)

To achieve the above-declared goal, students are encouraged to plant trees (First grade Arabic book: 111, 134, 135). The country is symbolized by its trees (The Trees of My Country Poem, fourth grade Arabic book: 32) Raising awareness about the importance of natural resource conservation is another expression of this theme (Fourth grade Arabic book: 59). The sixth grade book of Man and Environment axis, is entitled
The Resources, and is wholly devoted to developing a sense of natural resources conservation.

4.2.1.6 Discipline and Compliance

The 1990 conference recommendations stated that the aim of the curriculum is to build students’ “individual and collective behavior in the light of the teachings of religion.” Accordingly, discipline is tied to compliance to the teachings of Islam. Positive values such as being active and clean are linked to prayers.

This boy is a student. He is an active student. His clothes are clean. His body is clean. His room is clean. This boy prays at prayer time. He washes his body and prays. (First grade Arabic book: 162)

Another example with the same message is in the fourth grade Arabic book where a student is considered wholesome because he “does not postpone today work for tomorrow and prays his prayers in its time” (p.65). In the same textbook in “The Present” lesson, the act of reciting the Quran is presented as act of discipline that deserves recognition. Just rulers are presented in the textbook to develop a sense of justice in students. However, most of the examples used are taken from Islamic history, which makes it hard for a non-Muslim student to identify with, unless the curriculum is meant only for Muslim students. This appears to be the assumption.
4.2.2 Representation

4.2.2.1 Identity

In order to answer the second research question and find out how often the representation of the different ethnic groups occurs and how they are represented, the researcher divided this concept into two categories: representation by name and representation by religion. The analysis of the textbooks indicates dominance of characters who carry Arabic names. The total number of characters that appear in the Arabic textbooks is 324 (n = 324), 131 of them have identifiable identities. 127 characters out of 131 identified characters carry Arabic names, with percentage of 96.95%. The analysis reveals poor representation of non-Arabic minorities. Table 4-1 shows the percentage of appearance of characters by name. The only time Non-Arabic names are mentioned are in three lessons in 4th grade Arabic textbooks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textbook</th>
<th>Arabic Identity Representation</th>
<th>Non-Arabic Identity Representation</th>
<th>Identity</th>
<th>Not Identified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Grade Arabic</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Grade Arabic</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Grade Arabic</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Grade Arabic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Grade Environment</td>
<td>Man &amp; 1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Grade Environment</td>
<td>Man &amp; 0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Grade Environment</td>
<td>Man &amp; 0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Grade Islamic Religion</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Grade Islamic Religion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Grade Islamic Religion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>127 (39.19%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>4 (1.23%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>193 (58.57%)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Non-Arabic names appeared for the first time in the fourth grade Arabic book, in lesson 13. Although the lesson’s location is Malkal, which is a city in South Sudan, only one of five characters that appear in the lesson carries the name “Mary,” which is a non-Arabic name. The remaining four characters carry Arabic names. The picture associated with the lesson and shown in fig 4-1 left no opportunity to claim that these characters (even with their Arabic names) are representing minorities (non Arabs and non Muslims).

The second time is in the poem “Our Friend Mango.” The main theme of this lesson is promoting social cohesion and national unity. The last two lessons of the fourth grade textbook are about the life of Jesus. However, the story’s version is Islamic, which claims Jesus is a prophet as opposed to the divine nature attributed to Him in Christianity. This underlines the assumption that the audience is Muslim students conversant with the Islamic representation of Jesus.

Figure 4-2: Identity Representation-4th Grade Arabic Textbook
Identity representation by religion reveals similar findings as representation by name. Table 4-2 shows that when religion is mentioned in all the textbooks under analysis, it means Islam; with the exception of two lessons in the fourth grade Arabic book.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textbook</th>
<th>Islam</th>
<th>Christianity</th>
<th>Not Identified</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Grade Arabic</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Grade Arabic</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Grade Arabic</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Grade Arabic</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Grade Man &amp; Environment</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Grade Man &amp; Environment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Grade Man &amp; Environment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Grade Islamic Religion</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Grade Islamic Religion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Grade Islamic Religion</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>127 (39.19%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>4 (1.23%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>193 (58.57%)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.2.2 Religion

In order to answer the third research question about what religions are represented and emphasized in the curriculum, the main themes of each lesson in the textbooks under study were analyzed to investigate the representation of different religions in the curriculum. The results illustrated in table 4-3, show that 137 lessons out of 263 lessons (n = 263) have secular themes, which is 52.09% of the total number of lessons. Islamic themes represent 47.15%, with a total number of 124 lessons (n = 263). Lessons that carry Christian main themes represent 0.75% with two lessons out of 263 (n= 263).
Table 4-5: Religion Representation – Islamic Textbooks Included

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textbook</th>
<th>Secular</th>
<th>Islamic</th>
<th>Christian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Grade Arabic</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Grade Arabic</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Grade Arabic</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Grade Arabic</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Grade Man &amp; Environment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Grade Man &amp; Environment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Grade Man &amp; Environment</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that these results include Islamic religion textbooks but not Christian religion textbooks. The total number of lessons in Islamic textbooks is 85 (32.32%). Thus, these results may demonstrate bias in favor of representation of Islamic themes. Therefore, an additional table (Table 4-4) is added here to examine the religious representation where Islamic textbooks are excluded. In this case lessons with secular themes represent 76.11% of the total lessons, where Islamic themes represent 22.78% and Christian themes represent 1.11% of the total themes (n = 180)

Table 4-6: Religion Representation – Islamic Textbooks Excluded

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Textbook</th>
<th>Secular</th>
<th>Islamic</th>
<th>Christian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Grade Arabic</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Grade Arabic</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Grade Arabic</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Grade Arabic</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Grade Man &amp; Environment</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Grade Man &amp; Environment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8th Grade Man &amp; Environment</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With the exception of Islamic religion textbooks, more than seventy percent of the lessons appear as carrying secular themes. However, Islamic thoughts and beliefs are widely distributed all through the texts. It is clearly stated in the sixth grade religion textbook that some subjects of Islamic religion curriculum (such as *seera*\(^7\) and Islamic teachings) are transferred to other axes like Arabic language and the Man & Environment axis. These arrangements are made in accordance with the recommendations of the 1990 conference (Sixth grade Islamic religion textbook: 5). The structure makes it clear that the representation of Islam as a faith is not exclusive to the religious textbooks. It is apparent that the whole curriculum was designed to target Muslim students.

### 4.2.2.3 History

In order to answer the fourth research question regarding which historical events are emphasized and how they are represented, the research looked at the history textbooks. In the Sudanese basic school curriculum, history is not taught as a separate subject. History, together with geography and science, is included in the Man & Environment axis. In the sample analyzed, the main history book is the eighth grade Man & Environment book. In this book, out of 18 lessons (n = 18) five lessons dealt with the history of Northern/Central Sudan (which are Muslim-Arab areas), seven with Middle Eastern history and one with the Islamic World. None of the lessons dealt with African history. It is worth noting that even in lessons entitled “Sudan Kingdoms” only Funj and Fur, the two Islamic kingdoms were mentioned. None of the Christian kingdoms that existed in ancient Sudan were mentioned. It is apparent that Sudan is equivalent to North

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\(^7\) The life history of the prophet of Islam.
Sudan in the mind of curriculum developers, because South Sudan is mentioned only once on p.75 in a textbook entitled “History of Sudan”.

### 4.3 Qualitative Interviews

This section narrates the qualitative interviews that took place between November 28, 2005 and December 29, 2005. Three Officials from the National Center of Curriculum Development and Educational Research are interviewed. In order to avoid the danger of getting only the “official” and “partisan” perspectives, the research sought to interview other educators and experts in peace education who may give a different perspective. Five teachers, an education scholar and a peace activist were interviewed. Three informal interviews took place with one teacher and two parents (male and female). Because this research sought to understand the role of education in social cohesion, ethnic and religious representation plays a fundamental role in interviewee’s selection. Table 4-4 breaks down interviewees’ ethnicity and religious affiliation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Religious affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Official 1</td>
<td>Northerner</td>
<td>Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official 2</td>
<td>Northerner</td>
<td>Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official 3</td>
<td>Northerner</td>
<td>Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activist 1</td>
<td>Northerner</td>
<td>Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 1</td>
<td>Southerner</td>
<td>Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 2</td>
<td>Southerner</td>
<td>Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 3</td>
<td>Southerner</td>
<td>Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 4</td>
<td>Southerner</td>
<td>Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 5</td>
<td>Northerner</td>
<td>Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher 6</td>
<td>Northerner</td>
<td>Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education scholar 1</td>
<td>Southerner</td>
<td>Christianity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father 1</td>
<td>Northerner</td>
<td>Islam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother 1</td>
<td>Northerner</td>
<td>Christianity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.1 Representation in the Curriculum

Regarding representation of different ethnic groups in the curriculum, two opposing opinions appear in the interviewees’ answers. While two of the three officials agreed that the curriculum is representative and inclusive, others disagreed with this statement and held that the curriculum is centered around particular ethnic groups, specifically Northern Sudanese, and that other minorities receive limited, or no, representation at all. One official was so confident that the curriculum is inclusive, he stated

Because it is a national curriculum, we tried to consider – and these are written recommendations in the 1990 conference book- there are recommendations that the curriculum should include all the ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural diversity in Sudan. (Official 1)

Another official stated that, when curriculum was developed:

It was in our minds that all Sudanese society with all its inclinations and ethnicities and other diminutions was the general frame. On these bases curriculum strategies were developed, its goals and objectives and so forth. (Official 2)

Nevertheless, he made another a cautionary statement declaring that:

Of course, this is the beginning hit. People always need to sit and revise what has been done. Since this strategy started like this, it is necessary to be revised if it does not cover everything. (Official 2)
While these two officials admitted Sudan is a multiethnic country, the third official when asked the same question replied with another question asking sarcastically: “what do you mean by ‘different ethnic groups’?”

Other interviewees had different opinions about the ethnic representation in the basic schools textbooks. Teacher 1 stated that:

Generally, Sudan has many problems, its problems are attributed to its diversity, and the curriculum does not reflect this diversity…you see, the curriculum was based on the Central Sudan perceptions and conceptions. If you took the area just before Shendi [north] until El Gezira [south], you go to Kordofan [west] and the center [east], that is what all the curriculum is about. Moreover, these pictures of the curriculum also are reflected in the media. The media is representing this area only.

He explained how these hegemonic acts affect minorities’ sense of belonging: “because of that, people in the periphery feel as if they are not part of this country” (Teacher 1).

Teacher 2 narrated from his own experience as a mathematics teacher:

In math curriculum, there are many verses from the Quran. As a teacher who has no Islamic background, I either read it incorrectly or explain it incorrectly, which will give the Northern students a chance to make fun of me… you have, for example, in math, it is only Muslim scientists contributions that are mentioned and no one else. There are Africans who contributed in this, and Christians who contributed in math science. If they [curriculum developers] want to mention scientists’ contributions they
should be fair, but they only focus on Muslims and Arabs, and you will find this in all other textbooks. (Teacher 2)

Teacher 5 asserted his that the curriculum is biased and imbalanced:

The curriculum has not paid attention to many considerations. First, it has not paid attention to any religious differences in Sudan. One curriculum for all Sudan, with its diverse religions. Of course, Sudan has many religions. It has not considered the ethnic and environmental differences, the capacity and environment of each region. Moreover, the age of the targeted student was not considered at all... especially in Islamic religion curriculum. (Teacher 5)

The education scholar agreed with teachers that there is limited, or even no, representation for minorities in the curriculum. He clarified that the limited representation in the curriculum is decoration and does not imply inclusion:

The issue of representation in itself has two faces. The nominal representation or symbolic representation, which means just to decorate. This [the symbolic representation] is a limited representation and this is problematic in itself. This [symbolic representation] becomes a constant theme in the state official apparatuses and among officials. Even in the state ideology, the concept of multiculturalism in Sudan is absent from all its discourse. In basic school curriculum this is [multiculturalism] absolutely absent.

He went further, explaining how the representation is inconsistent, and made without attentiveness to the different cultures and ethnic groups:
Even this limited representation is done without awareness. There are some signs of this in basic school textbooks such as a Sudanese family in SPINE (English textbook). In this family, the fathers’ name is Deng and the son is Ladu. You cannot really understand which family could have these contradicting identities...In one family people carry names from different ethnic groups! This is an ignorant representation, ignorant representation damages a lot because it is meant only to decorate the picture, and not for educational purposes... and this makes us raise the question how long does it take us before we could break the ethnocentrism in our culture through educational curricula.

Ladu and Deng are used by different ethnic groups in the South. Therefore, it is rare to find the two names in one family. From the above example, it is clear that for the curriculum developers Deng and Ladu are Southern names. It reveals the total ignorance of the fact that Southerners are different groups, have different social systems, and different names. The process of Othering is evident in this case; they are Southerners and they are all the same.

Arabic language is the official language of instruction in all schools according to the 1990 conference recommendations. When considering the language issue, two officials conformed to the conference recommendations and emphasized that Arabic is the only common language among the Sudanese population and therefore there are no options to use a second language or multilingual education. Official 2 argued strongly that the Arabic, as the lingua franca, should be the medium of instruction:
If we talk about language, what is language?! Is not it the means of conversing between people? Southerners themselves, they do not have one language…There is something called Juba Arabic\(^8\), but there is no Juba English. Thus, Arabic is closer to them than any other language.

Interviewer: What about local languages?

They can translate [their local language] or do anything else, but at the end of the day, they do not have written languages.

Interviewer: To my knowledge, there are written local languages, Dinka, Nubian and Badawie for example.

I know Dinka people who speak Arabic. Well! Since language is the means of conversation, the current one should be Arabic. There is no Juba English but there is Juba Arabic.

Official 3 agreed with official 2 that Arabic should be the only option as a language of instruction and based his argument on two reasons. First, Arabic language has a huge literary tradition, which is not the case for other Sudanese local languages. The second is financial. He argued that developing a multilingual curriculum is costly, and Sudan, as a developing country cannot afford doing that. Officials 1 and 3 agreed that there are many obstacles to develop a multilingual curriculum. However, they explained that there are certain measures taken to ensure that students for whom Arabic is not their native language will be able to compete. These measures include a Special Arabic Exam (Arabic as a second language) (Official 1), and an intensive course in Arabic language sounds for those who are non-native speakers of Arabic (Official 3).

\(^8\) An Arabic local dialect used in the South
One teacher shared the officials’ opinion about keeping the Arabic language as the official medium of instruction. Teacher 2 stated, “We, Southerners, who studied in the 60s have no fluency problems in Arabic. The problem is not the language; the problem is when you politicize the language.” Although other interviewees did not express clearly their position regarding multilingual education, they expressed different views on the use of Arabic as a medium for instruction in education. Activist 1 declared that the version of classic Arabic that is used in schools, which is not Sudanese Arabic:

…remains as a heritage for falsifying identity rather than a medium for expressing identity, because it perpetuate that we are Arabs, but ethnically we are not…but it has been imposed by the colonial British administration to segregate people. Now you are imposing a character in the education, which is totally alien to the culture of the people. (Activist 1)

Teacher 5 explained that Arabic and Islam are coupled in the curriculum. Thus, language textbooks are transformed into religion textbooks, with all the examples and illustrations from Islamic history and the Quran (Teacher 5). This association between Islam and Arabic language is evident in the textbook analysis in the previous section. Non-Muslim students, who are learning Arabic as part of their education requirements and may not be interested in Islam, are forced to learn Islam, since the two come in the same package.

4.3.2 National History in the Curriculum

The way the national history is represented has a significant influence on the students’ historical conceptions as citizens. This research aims at studying how Sudan’s
history is represented in the basic education textbooks. When interviewees were asked their opinion about Sudan’s history representation, two views emerged. Two officials believed that Sudan’s history, as outlined in the curriculum, is balanced and inclusive; all other interviewees believed that the representation of the history is selective and biased. Official 1 stated that:

In history curriculum, all regional contributions to Sudan’s history are mentioned... I mean El Zaki Tamal, Northern people, Southern people, Osman Dighna, and Ali Abdel-lateef. You will notice from every region we mention something, so that a student from anywhere can find himself and his environment.

Although this official argued that the history curriculum includes everyone’s contribution, he failed to support his argument with evidence. He mentioned three historical figures and all of them are from the North and he ended up using an indistinct statement such as “Southern people” without providing a concrete example of who these people are.

The ignorance of contributions from dominated groups in the national history is invisible to the curriculum developers, but it is conspicuous to those who are neglected. Teacher 3 articulated his own experience and feelings about the matter:

The history of the Sudan is another story. In history, what I was told by my grandmother about so and so who struggled and fought and accomplished, when we come to read history none of our grandfathers are there. We found Al-Mahdi and Al-Mahsi family. Any of us, when we interact with others, feel that our people did nothing for this country; they
did not defend this country. They totally are forgotten. When any of us chat with colleagues and they say “Al-Mahdi is my grandfather and he did such and such,” you won’t find any grandfather to talk about. This history is only about certain families and certain regions.

Teacher 6 confirmed what teacher 3 said and she explained how her students, who are predominantly Southerners, hate history lessons and protest against the excessive ignorance of their ancestors’ contributions to Sudan’s history. Teacher 1 and the education scholar explained how the contributions of dominated groups are ignored. Teacher 1 stated:

The history in the current curriculum is only one region’s history. If you take Darfur history, for example; in the curriculum it starts from 1916. That is what is known to them [curriculum developers/ dominant group]. However before, Darfur that was a state and this is not reflected. In eastern Sudan’s history, it is only Mahdiya which is reflected. The whole history follows the Islamic ideology: Sinar\(^9\) Kingdom, Alabdlalab and Mahdiya for example, and everything else are ignored. Before these kingdoms [Islamic kingdoms] there were kingdoms and people, but nothing is reflected…Now if we come to the South; they don’t mention anything. History teachers may mention the Nuer resistance [against colonial administration], but never mention in detail who the Nuer are, what they did, and so on. In only two or three lines they may mention Nuer and Zandi, but no heroes, no events.

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\(^9\) An ancient Islamic state in central Sudan
He asserted how ignorance leads to a sense of marginalization and oppression, which, as he put it, is the main reason for the current conflict in Sudan:

Many regions in Sudan have the same problem as this. They call themselves marginalized. Because they are marginalized in everything, in education, in history and in culture. All of these troubles in Abuja [reference to Darfur peace talks in Abuja, Nigeria] because of marginalization.

Most of the interviewees held that the school curriculum imposes a version of history that serves the state Islamist ideology. Teacher 4 affirmed that:

The version of history in the curriculum is centered in [sic] all the events that happened in the rise and development of Islam, either Islamic history or history which based [sic] on the coming of the Arabs to the country. There is very little said about the history of other ethnic groups.

Teacher 5 agreed with teacher 4, and he confirmed that:

The history curriculum is centered on Islamic history…the Islamic history from a unilateral point of view. The Islamic history is from the ruling party’s point of view and philosophy. Thus, the heroism concept which is based on violence and military acts are a central concept in history curriculum and religion curriculum. That is why it is all about the history of wars and jihad and so on. There is a lot of criticism of certain historic events, but from a biased and non-objective point of view. That is the ruling class point of view.
Official 3 did not deny that the history curriculum is biased and unfair but he argued that the winners write history. He said: “In history there is the always bias of who writes it, so objectivity in history is not achievable.”

4.3.3 The Role of The Curriculum in Peace & Coexistence

Officials agreed that the national curriculum was developed to promote peace and coexistence. Official 1 emphasized that the curriculum was developed to include all ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity in Sudan, and accordingly, to promote harmony and coexistence. Official 2 declared “peace culture is diffused all through the curriculum. Peace and coexistence between different religions is also implied. National unity concepts are intentionally developed and included.” Official 3 explained that their aim was to:

…achieve nationality in curriculum. We call it a “mirror curriculum.” That means anybody is able to see himself in it. If you cannot see yourself in the curriculum, then it is a “television curriculum.” Now, we wanted national curriculum, to achieve unity and achieve for those others, their satisfaction, in a national framework (italics from the author).

Other interviewees had a different conception about this concept of a “mirror curriculum.” All other interviewees saw the curriculum as one-sided, representing one group, one ideology, one religion and one culture. These biases and imbalances, according to interviewees, have negative effects on social cohesion and coexistence. Marginalization, which leads to oppression and consequently conflict, as declared by teacher 1, is one manifestation of these negative effects. The education scholar declared
how imposing Islamic religion and values through the curriculum created alienation for non-Muslim students:

In schools’ public space, [Islamic] prayers are enforced. When the number of Christian students is low, those [Christians] continue learning Islamic religion. These arrangements have negative effects on students. These negative effects are currently very clearly manifested in the political sphere, when these students [Christians] have become public figures and started making statements about this situation; they stated that the future of the country would never be promising if one day we [Christians/Southerners] are forced to carry Arabic names to attain educational opportunities.

This hegemonic imposition of Islamic-Arabic system of meaning and values created polarization along ethnic and religious lines. The educational system contributed to dividing the country into us/them, Christian/Muslims and Arabs/Africans dichotomies. Activist 1 declared that:

…The curriculum is perpetuating division. The problem is that there is no vision has put [sic] to foster coexistence. The curriculum is helping a close ended identity and quite [sic] segregating. Culture may be an element, if injected into curriculum, that helps diversity and coexistence, and it might be a Nazi culture brewing racism and close identity and alienating others, and this [the later] the problem of education system in Sudan.
Teacher 4 gave an apparent example of how imposing a hegemonic culture on minorities led to violent acts of resistance in his village and as a result perpetuated tensions and division among the Sudanese:

It happened that Khalwa (Islamic school) in my area was burned twice or three times because people do not want it, and there is some kind of hate of Islam and Arabs. Because of that imposing of ideas has made people to hate Islam and the Arabs in some areas in Southern Sudan.

Teacher 5 agreed with other interviewees that the current curriculum perpetuates social division and polarization. However, he added that the current curriculum is also perpetuating intolerance through fostering a culture of violence. As mentioned in the previous section, the theme of fostering violence is one of the noticeable and frequent themes that appeared in the textbooks analyzed. Teacher 5 confirmed this research finding by stating that:

There is a central issue, which is the concept of Jihad. This issue of great interest to me as a peace studies scholar. I believe that the curriculum fosters a culture of violence and war and not a culture of peace, because it concentrates on Jihad, and this is in different grades.

Teacher 5 stressed that the concentration on Jihad and war is not limited to curricula; rather it is emphasized by extracurricular activities:

In addition to what is in the curriculum, there are additional activities, sport activities, cultural activities and all of that is concentrating on Jihad concept. Even in cultural activities, they concentrate on Jihad songs. Children in basic education and students in secondary education listen
repeatedly to these songs. These songs encourage and praise war and violence. It carries emotional statements not rational statements. It concentrates on stimulating the religious emotions. All media are involved in such activities.

It is worth noting that among the extra curricular activities that encourage violence and exhort Jihad is the school uniform itself. In Sudan, students dress in similar attire for school sessions. After the 1990 educational conference, the onetime white and green school uniform has now been replaced with jungle green military uniform. This is an indirect way of fostering war in the minds of the students: a manifestation of a nation at war. Apart from the dress codes of the students, the media are replete with messages in praise of war.

4.3.4 Suggestions

From the above narratives, it is apparent that the curriculum and education system in Sudan are acting as a catalyst of violence rather than an agent of cohesion. Interviewees then were asked what needs to be done.

Officials, although they emphasized that the curriculum is balanced and inclusive, declared that there is a continuous process of evaluation to identify any problems in the curriculum and accordingly make the necessary modifications. Other interviewees collectively expressed a critical need for radical curriculum reform. They suggested a national curriculum that represented the different ethnic and religious groups. They stressed that the conference representatives should reflect the ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity of the country.
4.4 Discussion

The review of the literature on the relationship between education and power in Chapter 2 reveals that education is never a neutral endeavor. Education is always a dynamic process, which is rooted in a socio-cultural and political context. Education, as a terrain of struggle over control of knowledge, has always been manipulated by elites and dominant groups to advance their hegemonic ideas. The education system in Sudan is not an exception.

Sudanese education has always been a victim of political interference. Different regimes have used education and educational institutions to advance their political agenda, with a new curriculum policy following every major political change. An examination of the different curriculum conference recommendations reveals a clear association between the ruling class ideology and official knowledge presented in the curriculum. Thus, it is of great importance for the purpose of this research to understand the ideological principles that guided the development of the current curriculum and appreciate how the curriculum reflects those ideologies.

When the current ruling party, National Islamic Front (NIF), came to power in 1989, it sought to revive the Islamic nation with Sudan at the forefront (The Islamic State, 1994; Al Mubarak, 2001). Control over knowledge has been of great concern for the current regime. Islamic zealots within the ruling party have always viewed education as a suitable platform to impose their dream of reviving the Islamic empire. One of these government officials explained how the control over knowledge is an important tool for domination: “A vision for life, which is based on the Islamization of knowledge, is a vision for the Sudanese and Muslim excelling in and dominating the world” (Dr. Abdul
Rahman Ahmed, quoted in Al Mubabark, 2001: 10). Hence, Islamization of knowledge is declared as a means and weapon in the struggle to dominate the world. To achieve this goal, the education system has been manipulated to condition the young minds as soldiers with a “holy mission” as defined by the NIF.

The first declared aim of Sudanese education, according to the 1990 conference, is “to work for the consolidation of religious belief in the young people.” It was also declared that the aim of education is to instill values and behavior “which are based on the teachings of Heavens” (conference recommendation, 1990). It is worth noting here that the analysis of textbooks reveals that 96.95% of characters with identified religion are Muslims; and 98.41% of the times religion is mentioned it is Islam. From the textbook analysis, it is apparent that religion is synonymous with Islam and Heaven is understood according to the Islamic version of heaven. Accordingly, the 1990 conference recommendation, and the curriculum reform it brought, was made to be in concurrence with the Knowledge Islamization project declared by the ruling elite. This project is manifested in many areas, but the major manifestation was in identity representation, and national history.

The current regime introduced an official version of Sudanese identity that is associated with Islam. To understand how this new version of Sudanese identity works, it is useful to link it with the citizenship and passport law of 1994. In 1994, a new law was issued which gave the President the right to grant citizenship to any foreigner. It was declared by the head of legal affairs in the Transitional National Council that “the citizenship and passports which are recognized in our Sharia state are the words ‘la ilaha illa Allah’ there is no God except Allah and thus Sudan is open for all Muslims” (quoted
in Al Mubarak, 2001: 100). Although there are no definite figures of how many Non-
Sudanese Muslims had been granted citizenship according to this law, the overflow of
Arab -Afghans to Sudan in the 90’s was a clear manifestation of these stipulations. This
new proposal of definition of Sudanese identity, as much as it coincides with the ruling
class ideology, is in opposition to the constitutional stipulation, which states “Sudan is an
independent, sovereign State. It is a democratic, decentralized, multi-cultural, multi-
lingual, multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and multi-religious country where such diversities co-
exist” (Sudan Constitution, 2005). However, this version of Sudanese identity that is
defined according to the Islamic symbols, excludes non-Muslims from being Sudanese,
and it is reflected throughout the curriculum under study.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the homeland, which refers to Sudan in
textbooks, is defined as an Islamic-Arabic state according to symbols portraying Arabic-
Islamic values. Patriotism is, in fact, a call for nationalism disguised as patriotism.
Patriotism is defined as synonymous with Islamist nationalism. Statements such as “Our
leader is the prophet, and we do not have any other than the prophet Mohamed, the Quran
is our constitution” are diffused all through the text (fourth grade’s Arabic textbook: 42).
This official univocal expression of the national identity implies that the norms, which
govern the concept of citizenship, are identified with Arabic-Islamic culture as the key
determinant. This is a materialization of exclusionary Othering, which excludes whoever
dose not share the Arabic-Islamic cultural symbols, irrespective of citizenship that is
acquired by birth. To belong to Sudan, you have to be a Muslim. Islam and Arabic
culture are, however, coupled in the curriculum. Arabic is not only considered as the
means of conversation between different groups or the nation’s lingua franca, as argued
by the curriculum development officials, but rather as the holy language alongside Islam, the religion, with Arabic “being the Qur’an tool to convey the Truth” (Curriculum Development Center, nd). Therefore, being a Muslim is not enough for inclusion. Identifying with the Arabic-Islamic symbols is the prerequisite for inclusion.

The curriculum perpetuates this construction of exclusive identity. The basic education curriculum constructs, through representation, images, and values, a version of Sudanese identity that is practically the same as Northern-Arab-Muslim identity. This is manifested in the images, the names and religious affiliation of characters depicted in the textbooks. The absence of any element of the dominated groups’ culture, value system and meaning, technically sets a “selective version of a national culture…installed as an absolute condition for any social identity” (Johnson, 1990: 71). A monocultural national curriculum of this kind “deals with diversity by centering the always ideological ‘we’” (Apple, 1996: 34) and leaves out the dominated groups with limited choices. Dominated groups have to accommodate themselves within the dominant discourse and accept assimilation or otherwise they are alienated and excluded. One of the officials stated that the curriculum was developed to be a “mirror curriculum”. As Johnson (1990) articulates, the choices of the dominated in Sudan are narrowed down to two options: “national culture or no culture at all” (p. 71). The textbook analysis reveals that out of 128 named characters there are only 4 non-Arabic names. These results say a lot about whose image should be seen through this “mirror curriculum.” This official denial of the country’s diversity sends a strong message to the dominated groups that they do not belong there.

This exclusionary version of Sudanese identity has far-reaching implications on the social cohesion and harmony among different groups. Themes of sense of
marginalization and exclusion frequently emerged during the interviews. Statements such as “people in the periphery feel as if they are not part of this country” (Teacher 1), “how long will it take us before we could break the ethnocentrism in our culture through educational curricula” (Education scholar), and “[we] feel that our people did nothing for this country; they did not defend this country. They totally are forgotten” (Teacher 3) reveal clearly how excluded the dominated groups feel. Deng (1995) makes a significant statement on the relationship between the official policies and conflict in Sudan. He states that a vital factor in determining the critical turning point in Sudan’s conflict has always been “the extent to which policies or actions of the central government have promoted or diminished a sense of belonging or identification with the country on more or less equitable footing with the North.” He further explains how official policies, including educational policies, have “delineated the margin, the dividing line between peace and war, cooperation and conflict, unity and polarization” (p.177).

History is another terrain of inclusion and exclusion. According to Graham-Brown (1994), state policies tend to define the national history in favor of the dominant groups by constructing “a version of history, particularly of the recent past, which heightens the role of that group at the expense of the others” (p. 28). The official version of Sudan’s national history is a substantial demonstration of the manipulation of the national history to coincide with the dream of the Islamic state. This is manifested in the representation of history of Sudan as a history of Islamic kingdoms. In lessons entitled “Sudan Kingdoms”, only Funj and Fur, the two Islamic kingdoms, are mentioned. None of the non-Islamic kingdoms that existed in ancient Sudan are mentioned. As one of the interviewees pointed out, the official version of Sudan’s history is centered in the events
that happened during the rise and spread of Islam. Sudan’s history before colonization as outlined in the curriculum is divided into certain periods. These are the coming of Arabs, Turku-Egyptian and Mahdiya. The acknowledgment that is given to specific historical periods says a lot about which historical events receive more salience, and are therefore more meaningful and memorable. Entman (1993) states that the way facts are selected, organized and presented can “promote a particular problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (p.52). The selective presentation of Sudanese national history as a history of an Islamic state is another indicator of the role that official knowledge, as disseminated in the curriculum, plays in promoting the imposition of an Islamic-Arabic national identity. Domination breeds resistance. Resistance can take many forms, from passive resistance such as refusing to attend history classes (Teacher 6, personal interview), to the violent resistance such as burning of khalawi (religion schools) (Teacher 4, personal interview). It could also manifest itself in extremely catastrophic situations such as the half century of civil war and loss of 2 million human lives.

Curriculum development officials stated that the curriculum was developed to promote peace and coexistence. Official 2 declared “peace culture is diffused all through the curriculum.” However, there is no supportive evidence that promoting peace and cohesion is one of the aims of the curriculum. There is a repeated and persistent appearance of the theme of Jihad and war. This is another manifestation of the unrelenting attempts of the Islamic identity construction. The insinuation here is that Sudan is an Islamic nation, for only an Islamic nation can carry on Jihad. Patriotism is
thus equated to commitment not so much to a country, but more to Islam. Ultimately, non-Muslims are excluded, Othered, and declared as enemies.

Kellow (1998) in his study of the role Radio Rwanda played in inciting violence during Rwanda’s genocide stated that one of the frames that the radio perpetuated is the “risk and danger frame.” The “risk and danger frame” puts citizens in a defensive situation and stimulates horror against a real or perceived enemy. That is what the Sudanese curriculum and extracurricular activities and surroundings, such as the school uniform and media, perpetuate. The ruling elite, through different social institutions, schools, media, and religious organizations aims at emphasizing the theme of a “nation at war.” The curriculum plays a significant role in reinforcing this theme. Throughout the textbooks, images and the poetry of war are constant themes. Heroism is associated with war. History lessons are centered on the history of wars. Islamic history is summarized as a history of wars against kufar (non-Muslims). Inflammatory statements such as “enemies’ armies,” “enemies’ conspiracy,” and “enemies’ abhorrence” are diffused through the text. “Enemies” are manifested in many forms. Sometimes they are kufar, other times they are Jews and many times they are not identified, giving the students the option to identify whoever they consider their enemy. But the relentless message is that there are always enemies.

The community collective identity, especially in religion textbooks, is presented solely as Islamic collective identity. Thus, the concepts of brotherhood/sisterhood are limited to Muslims, and fall short of embracing the whole of humanity. Accordingly, this exclusive collective identity denies any calls for national unity in a multi-religious country like Sudan. The message that is implanted in children’ minds is that whoever
does not share our faith does not belong to us. With this univocal construction of collective identity, it is more likely that children will identify others, who are not Muslims, as their enemies. War has always been fueled by the myth of an evil enemy: “We first kill people with our minds, before we kill them with weapons. Whatever the conflict, the enemy is always the destroyer. We’re on God’s side; they’re barbaric. We’re good; they’re evil” (Keen, 1991, p. 18). It is remarkably how the curriculum ties violence with religion to legitimize the exclusion and othering. Statements such as “with my faith and my weapon” (fourth grade Arabic book, p.121), “I swear I will never leave my goal as long as I carry my holy book and my gun” (fourth grade Arabic book: 42) clearly declare who the enemy is. The language of these texts bears witness by itself about the kind of culture the curriculum fosters. The type of education that students in Sudan have gone through since 1990 can easily lead to creating a generation that suffers from jingoism and xenophobia. An apparent manifestation of this xenophobic tendency is the crusades by mujahedeen (fighters) of Popular Defense Army, mostly university and high school students, which took place in the South. This shows clearly how the educational system and the curriculum serve as a catalyst for violence in Sudan.

Curriculum design and textbook development is centralized in Sudan. The National Center for Curriculum Development and Educational Research is the only authorized entity for curriculum development. Interviews with the center’s officials revealed a total denial of the biases and imbalances in the curriculum. Officials strongly argued that the curriculum is balanced but failed to support these arguments with evidence. There are two possible explanations for this: either curriculum development officials are consciously advancing the ruling elites’ hegemonic agenda by denying the
country’s diversity and are actively participating in the construction of a monocultural identity for the whole nation; or they are unsuspecting victims of the manipulation of the ruling elite who are out to advance and impose the idea of the Islamic state as formulated by the NIF and Arabic culture as internalized by the majority Northerners. Whatever the case, the curriculum, which is developed by these officials, seems an active agent in reproducing the status quo.

Freire (1972) describes education as domesticating or liberating. Advancing the dominant group’s ideology through socializing learners is an expression of a domesticating education. Students in Sudan, in spite of their diverse cultures and religions, are exposed to one segment of Sudanese culture as the common culture. This kind of education as Freire states, “served the purposes of deculturating [the students]; on the other hand it acculturated them into a predefined colonial model” (Friere, 1987: 143). The educational system in Sudan denies a segment of the Sudanese population from practicing their culture. Education functions as a tool in the state ideological apparatus for social reproduction.

Rutayisire, Kabano, a key education stakeholder in Rwanda stated that: “a closer look at the education system before the 1994 genocide reveals that the education system—and specifically the school curriculum—failed the nation” (Tawil, 2004: 18). Sudan has to learn from Rwanda’s genocide. The kind of education and the culture it perpetuates failed and will continue to fail our nation, if no serious attention is paid to it.
5.1 Summary

Sudan stands out in the 20th century as a country that was embroiled in one of history’s longest civil wars. The government-sponsored war has left over two million dead and six million displaced. The war pitted Northern Sudanese, who are culturally Arabs and mainly Muslims by religion, against the Southern ethnic groups who are seen as African and belonging to both traditional and Christian religions. At one level, the conflict between Arabs and those regarded as Indigenous Black Populations was a racial conflict. On another level, it was a religious conflict pitting Muslims against Christians and Sudanese of traditional religions. Both the racial and religious conflicts combined to form a third point of contest – a cultural conflict. Additionally, this conflict also had an economic angle that pitted a more-developed North against a less-developed South.

On January 9, 2005, the Government of Sudan (GOS) and Sudan People Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/SPLA) signed a peace agreement, ending the longest civil war in the 20th century. A new interim constitution was approved, heralding a new era. This interim constitution states that The Republic of the Sudan is committed to the respect and promotion of unity, equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms. These constitutional stipulations form the ideal. For it to be realized, all Sudanese people and authorities should be committed to the promotion of social cohesion and deepening trust and accord among different groups. It is fundamental that the history
of prejudices is overcome, in order for structural imbalances and socio-economic and cultural inequalities inherent in societal institutions to be corrected.

Education is the key point. Schools are spaces for socialization. However, no form of education, as a source of knowledge, is politically neutral (Shor, 1992; Apple, 1991). Curricula are the educational instruments that circulate the knowledge diffused through the educational process. The way the curriculum is set can influence the educational outcomes. Critical analysis of the curriculum may provide a better understanding of the nature of the relationships between education, social divisions, and political conflict and better insight into developing a tolerant and balanced curriculum, which is fundamental in healing and reconciling a country ravaged by war. This research aims at critically analyzing the Sudanese national primary school curriculum and identifying the biases and imbalances, if any, and investigating to what extent curriculum fosters social cohesion and tolerance by addressing the following questions:

1. Which themes are emphasized in the primary school textbooks?
2. How often does the representation of the different ethnic groups occur and how are they represented?
3. Which religions are represented in the primary school curriculum and how are they represented?
4. Which historical events are emphasized and how are they represented?
5. Which languages are emphasized in the primary school curriculum?
6. What images are associated with minorities (Non-Arab, Non-Muslims) in the primary school curriculum?
The research outlines the historical background of Sudan’s conflict as well as the history of the educational system development. Since this research aims at understanding the role of education in Sudan's nation building, it also explores the intellectual discourse on education and social cohesion, the relationship between education and power, and the role of education in social identity construction. The review of the literature provides a theoretical framework for understanding how the representation of ethnicity, history and religion in Sudan’s basic education curriculum affects the current social conflict.

The research used thematic analysis to analyze the themes appearing in the approved textbooks. The research used textbooks officially approved by the Ministry of Education as the primary source of data. The research employed qualitative interviewing techniques to solicit information from key persons involved in developing the national primary schools curriculum. To avoid getting the official point of view, the research also solicited information from educators and activists.

Considering the first research question, the analysis of textbooks reveals six themes. These are patriotism, resolving conflict through violence, collectivism and cooperation, family values, environmental conservation, and discipline and compliance.

Considering the second research question, the representation in the textbooks is examined. The analysis of the textbooks indicates dominance of characters who carry Arabic names. The total number of characters that appear in the Arabic textbooks is 324 (n = 324), 131 of them have identifiable identities. 127 characters out of 131 identified characters carry Arabic names, a percentage of 96.95%. The analysis reveals poor
representation of non-Arabic minorities. Identity representation by religion reveals similar findings to representation by name.

In order to answer the third research question about what religions are represented and emphasized in the curriculum, the main themes of each lesson in the textbooks under study were analyzed to investigate the representation of different religions in the curriculum. The results illustrated in table 4-3, show that 137 out of 263 lessons (n = 263) have secular themes, which is 52.09% of the total number of lessons. Islamic themes represent 47.15%, with a total number of 124 lessons (n = 263). Lessons that carry Christian main themes represent 0.75% with two lessons out of 263 (n= 263). Where Islamic textbooks excluded from the analysis to avoid the bias in favor of Islam, lessons with secular themes represent 76.11% of the total lessons, where Islamic themes represent 22.78% and Christian themes represent 1.11% of the total themes (n = 180).

In order to answer the fourth research question regarding which historical events are emphasized and how they are represented, the research looked at the history textbooks. In the sample analyzed, the main history book is the eighth grade Man & Environment book. In this book, out of 18 lessons (n = 18) five dealt with the history of Northern/Central Sudan (which are Muslim-Arab areas), seven with Middle Eastern history and one with the Islamic World. None of the lessons dealt with African history.

Qualitative interviews were conducted to inform the textbooks analysis. Three officials from the National Center of Curriculum Development and Educational Research were interviewed. Five teachers, an education scholar and a peace activist were interviewed.
Regarding representation of different ethnic groups, religion and national history in the curriculum, two opposing opinions appear in the interviewees’ answers. Officials stated that the curriculum is inclusive. All other interviewees stated that the curriculum is centered on Northern Sudan culture, history. Islam is emphasized in the curriculum.

Officials agreed that the national curriculum was developed to promote peace and coexistence. Officials emphasized that the curriculum was developed to include all ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity in Sudan, and accordingly, to promote harmony and coexistence. All other interviewees saw the curriculum as one-sided, representing one group, one ideology, one religion and one culture. Non-official interviewees stated how imposing Islamic religions and values through the curriculum created alienation for non-Muslim students and created polarization along ethnic and religious lines. Consequently, according to interviewees, the curriculum perpetuates social division and polarization.

5.2 Conclusion

Sudan’s national school curriculum is shaped by the prevailing political climate and it is designed to marginalize Sudanese minorities while recognizing and promoting the dominant group. In the process, education has become an effective tool to polarize the Sudanese society. Education has therefore been used as a tool of alienation of one Sudanese group from the others thereby further polarizing a nation already bleeding from war.

Education in Sudan denies a significant section of the population their identity and culture, as young minds are indoctrinated in the dominant culture reflected in the
education system. It also deprives them of their freedom to belong to a culture of their own choice. In the end, education is turned into a catalyst for conflict rather than an agent for cohesion.

5.3 Suggestions

To attain a society where people view one another as belonging together, and which is devoid of prejudices, structural imbalances and inequalities inherent in societal institutions and structures will need to be corrected. An urgent reform of the educational system is needed. More importantly, the hegemonic ideology that guides the curriculum development needs to be addressed seriously. Counter-hegemonic action calls for a transformation coming from within. The people who take the center stage must be empowered to query the status quo by raising fundamental questions through reflection.

Conferences that involve all stakeholders (teachers, parents, educational scholars and activists) are needed. However, dominated groups must be involved in providing solutions through articulation of their concerns. This approach is guided by Freirean philosophy that “attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects” (Freire, 1993, p.64). Any reform in the current curriculum policy should engage all Sudanese voices, especially those who lack representation throughout the independent Sudan’s history. Such participation by the dominated should not be a favor bestowed on them by some external party but rather a result of their conscieintization (Freire, 1994).
Ultimately, the univocal expression of Sudanese identity needs to be questioned and stopped, if Sudan’s national unity is ever to be achieved.

5.4 Areas for Further Research

This research sought to look at the Sudanese basic education curriculum and to examine the kind of culture it fosters in children. The research shows that the kind of curriculum the Sudanese children are going through is perpetuating violence and social division. It is important to understand how this curriculum affects children’s perceptions towards each other and towards the united Sudan where different ethnic groups and religions can coexist. Conducting further research that looks specifically into how the curriculum effects children’s perceptions will enrich the findings of this research regarding the role of education in social cohesion/division.

Schools are important sites of socialization, but they are not the only agents of identity construction. Other institutions such as media, family and religious organizations play an essential role. Further research to explore the role of each of these institutions may give a holistic picture of the relationship between identity construction and issues of power and hegemony in Sudan.
References


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Appendix (A): Coding Book

Main Theme:

Religion

1. Islamic Religion: The main topic of the lesson is about Islam or Quraan or Haddeth\(^{10}\) is quoted in more than half of the paragraphs in the lesson.

2. Christian Religion: The main topic of the lesson is about Christianity or Bible is quoted in more than half of the paragraphs in the lesson.

3. Secular

Tolerance:

1. Promote coexistence:

   - Emphasize national unity
   - Emphasize Sudan diversity in positive way
   - Emphasize peace and coexistence
   - Deemphasize religious differences

2. Division:

   - Emphasize religions differences in terms of dividing the citizens to two groups, Muslims and others
   - Talk about ‘Jihad’\(^{11}\) against ‘Kufar’\(^{12}\) and encourage it
   - Devalue religions other than Islam or non-Arabic speakers

Ethnic Representation: Through character identity analysis via name, religion and role played as portrayed in the text.

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\(^{10}\) The speech of the prophet Mohamed

\(^{11}\) Holy War

\(^{12}\) Non-Muslims
Name    1-Arabic or non Arabic name but widely accepted among the Arabized Sudanese.
        2- Non-Arabic
        3- Not Identified

Religion: 1-Islam (character belonging to Islamic faith)
        2- Christianity (character belonging to Christianity faith)
        3- Others (character belonging to other faith)
        4- Not identified (character belongs to an unidentified faith)

Role    1- Hero (character plays a major positive role)
        2- Villian (an evil character in a story or main enemy of the hero)
        3- Marginal (character plays an insignificant role in the story)
        4- Others

Historic Event:

Location: 1- North/Central Sudan
        2- South Sudan
        3- Middle East
        4- Africa (excluded North Africa)
        5- Islamic World (Excluded North Africa & Middle East)
        6- Others

Historical Heroes:

Where from: 1- North/Central Sudan
2- South Sudan

3- Middle East

4- Africa (excluded North Africa)

5- Islamic World (Excluded Africa & Middle East)

6- Others
Appendix (B): Interview Guide

1. How do you define/conceptualize curriculum?

2. Who designs school curriculum?

3. Do you think the curriculum balanced in language, ethnic representation, etc?

4. Who selects the textbooks?

5. Do you think the curriculum promotes peace and coexistence in Sudan? If not what do you suggest?

6. What do you think should be added to the curriculum?

7. What do you think should be removed?

8. What is the role of schools in promoting social cohesion?

9. Do you think the representation of history of Sudan fair and inclusive?

10. What do you think is the effect of curriculum content on the pupils and society in the long term?
Appendix (c): Conference Recommendations

First National Education Conference (1969)

This conference followed the Numeiri military coup, which seized power from the second democratic government in May 1969. The main conference recommendations were:

- Linking the curriculum content with the surrounding of the pupil and giving teachers the freedom of choice from amongst a variety of books on the same subject.
- Highlighting the Arab-African association in shaping Sudanese identity.
- Developing and enhancing the positive attitudes towards labor work.
- Considering the individual differences in designing the content of subjects.


This conference took place after the declaration of Sharia as the supreme law of the country. This period was characterized by the government’s inclination towards the Arab Muslim World. The National Curriculum Conference was convened in Khartoum, 1984 and had the following recommendations:

- Redesigning curriculum according to the Islamic orientation and new developments in the scientific and technological fields.
- Involving all relevant parties interested in education in curriculum development.
- Making curriculum development a priority in educational policies.
• Establishing a technical body for curriculum development and providing it with an adequate budget, and linking it with higher education institutions and research centers.

• Developing and enhancing the positive attitude towards labor work in the first stages of general education.

• Including preparation of youth and observing girls-specific educational particularities and their preparation as wives, mothers and participants in comprehensive development.

• Developing pre-school curriculum (kindergarten and Khalawi (Islamic religious schools)).

**National Curriculum Conference (1987)**

This conference took place after overthrow of the Numeiri regime in the popular uprising of April 1985. The Conference produced the following recommendations:

• Setting national curriculum with an integrated content and activities seeking to achieve national unity.

• Developing textbooks with diversified contents, as to suit the students’ local surroundings.

• Developing means of measurement and assessment.

• Developing the teaching of languages, especially Arabic language.

• Giving the government authority to supervise special schools and the schools for special education.
• Paying attention to Educational Guidance and Orientation to integrate civic education in the curricula’s content, and to strengthen the environmental and hygienic education in the basic education level (Selman, 1990, p. 133-134)