**School Dropout as a Challenge to universal basic education in Sudan**

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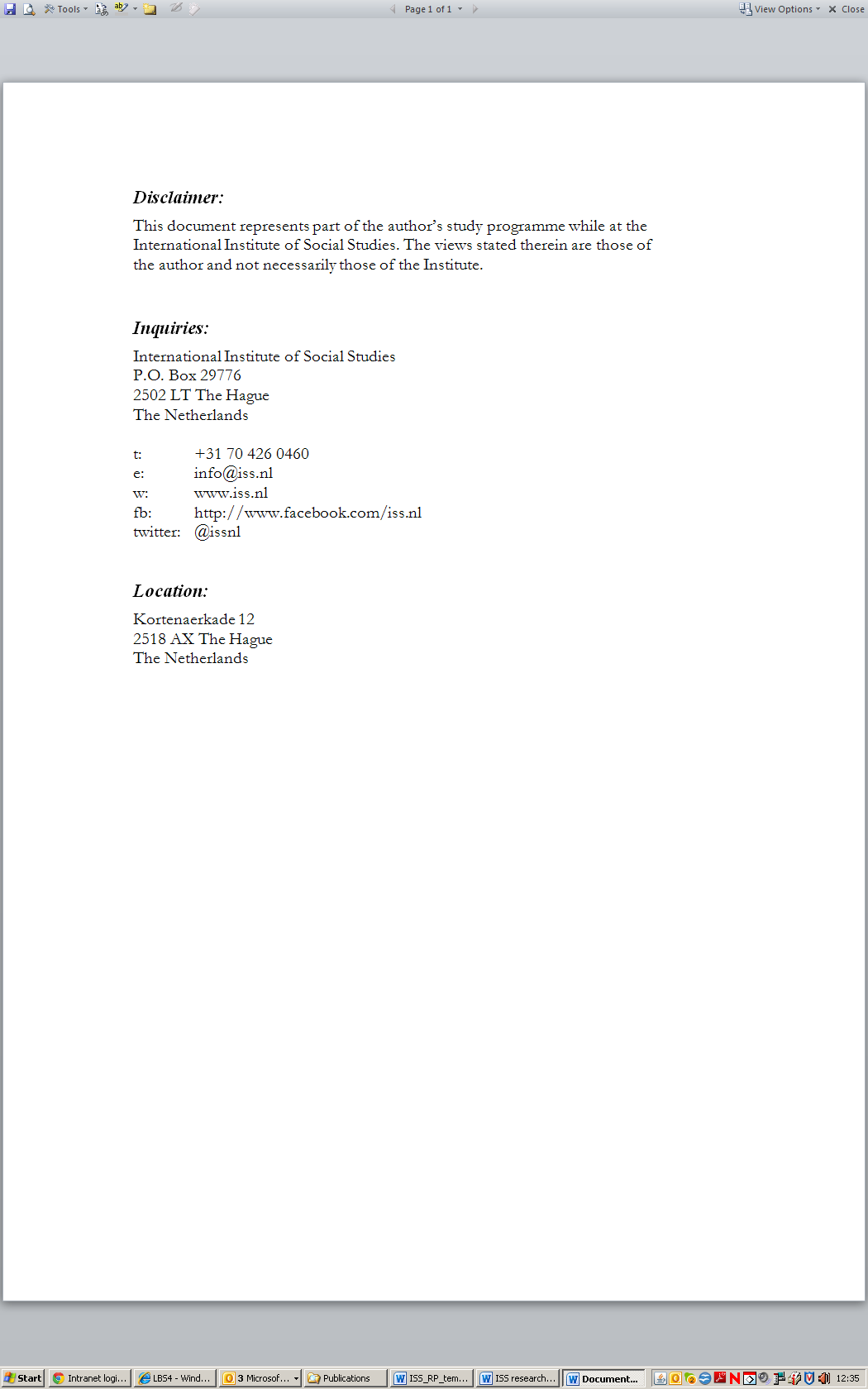
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**Contents**

[List of Tables iv](#_Toc367718318)

[List of Figures iv](#_Toc367718319)

[List of Maps iv](#_Toc367718320)

[List of Appendices iv](#_Toc367718321)

[List of Acronyms v](#_Toc367718322)

[Abstract vi](#_Toc367718323)

[Chapter 1 Introduction 1](#_Toc367718324)

[Research problem 5](#_Toc367718325)

[Research objectives 5](#_Toc367718326)

[Research questions 6](#_Toc367718327)

[Research methodology 6](#_Toc367718328)

[Scope of the paper 8](#_Toc367718329)

[Structure of the paper 8](#_Toc367718330)

[Chapter 2 18](#_Toc367718331)

[The theoretical and conceptual framework 18](#_Toc367718332)

[Why student dropouts of school?? 21](#_Toc367718333)

[Why a school dropout is a concern? 20](#_Toc367718334)

[Rights-based approach 23](#_Toc367718335)

[Social exclusion approach 21](#_Toc367718336)

[Chapter 3 31](#_Toc367718337)

[Contextualizing School dropouts in Sudan 10](#_Toc367718338)

[1.1 Background on the country socio-demography, politics and economic characteristics 10](#_Toc367718339)

[1.1.1 How education system works 10](#_Toc367718340)

[1.1.2 The National Policy of Education for All (NPEA) 15](#_Toc367718341)

[Chapter 4 42](#_Toc367718342)

[Discussion 42](#_Toc367718343)

[Figure 1.4 48](#_Toc367718344)

[Chapter 5 47](#_Toc367718345)

[Findings and conclusion **Error! Bookmark not defined.**](#_Toc367718346)

[Appendices 47](#_Toc367718347)

[References 50](#_Toc367718348)

List of Tables

[Table 1: The progress in basic school enrolment during the period 1990 to- 2001. 11](#_Toc372196674)

[Table 2: Table No. 2: Percentages of enrolment within the states and their proportion to national percentage of enrolment in year 2001- 2002 12](#_Toc372196675)

[Table 3: Number of Basic schools and average of the class by states in year 2000- 2001. 14](#_Toc372196676)

[Table 4: Public spending on education for the years 2000 to 2004 30](#_Toc372196677)

[Table 5: The disparities of public spending on education across the country regions 30](#_Toc372196678)

[Table 6: Household and housing indication 31](#_Toc372196679)

[Table 7:Statistics of school dropout 31](#_Toc372196680)

[Table 8: The multiple factors that influence the phenomenon of school dropout. 39](#_Toc372196681)

List of Figures

[Figure 1: Figure 1: The rose of girls’ enrolment during the period 1990 to 2001. 11](#_Toc372196692)

[Figure 2: Figure No. 2: The number of population between 6 to 13 years by states in 2001-2002 12](#_Toc372196693)

[Figure 3: Rate of poverty across the regional state. 38](#_Toc372196694)

[Figure 4: Students who attained the first 100 grades in secondary school examinations in year 2008. 41](#_Toc372196695)

[Figure 5: Students who attained the first 100 grades in secondary school examinations in year 2010 41](#_Toc372196696)

[Figure 6: Students at class room at Al Wazazeen basic school-East Darfur 50](#_Toc372196697)

[Figure 7: Water facility at AL Nahdda Basic School in Nyala-South Darfur 51](#_Toc372196698)

[Figure 8: Poor school environment in marginalized regions in Sudan 51](#_Toc372196699)

[Figure 9 52](#_Toc372196700)

[Figure 10 52](#_Toc372196701)

List of Maps

[Map 1.1 Map of Ethiopia **Error! Bookmark not defined.**](file:///H:\RESEARCH%20PAPERS\ISS_RP_template_2013.dotx#_Toc362521528)

List of Appendices

[Appendix 1 Sample table 47](#_Toc362521534)

List of Acronyms

UNCRC The United Nations Convention on the rights of Child

UNESCO United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNICEF United Nations Child Fund

UNDP United Nations Development Programme

UPE Universal Primary Education

EFA Education for All

EU The European Union

NPEFA the National Policy for Education for All

ACDE Agreement against Children Discrimination in Education

ACR Institute of Child Rights PIO Plan International Organization ESAR Eastern and Southern African Region OOSC Out-of-School Children SDCBS Sudan Central Bureau of Statistics JEM Justice and Equality Movement SPLM/A Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army

Abstract

This research paper attempts to explore the underpinning reasons behind the phenomenon of children dropping out of school at the early stage of education (basic/primary schooling). The paper firstly reviews the education system in the Republic of Sudan, with more focus on the National Policy of Education for All (NPEA) and its social, economic and political implications. In order to meet the above objective; the paper uses secondary data gathered from different sources including Federal and Local government, United Nations and other International and national Organizations and the media. The study employs citizenship and right based approaches, and critically evaluates the connection between the education policy and the phenomenon of school dropouts, before it concludes with recommendations which include suggestions of strategies which will assist in dealing with the issue of school dropout.

**Relevance to Development Studies**

In the world of today, education inclusion and exclusion have become much related to the issues of public policy and social development policy in particular. As it has been seen in the UK through the ‘Joined-up’ policy initiative or the ‘Social Inclusion’ initiative of the South Australian government (Sayed: 2003). Early school dropouts at the basic level of education stands as a serious challenge for state policy and actions that aim to ensure all children at school age are enrolled in school. Much has been said about the importance of education for the development of individuals, society or the whole state. The human capital theory sees education as an important investment that leads to a better future for individuals. Therefore, in the same regard, other authors also find that there is much evidence that shows that education has significant effects on poverty reduction and poverty eradication for the long run. This has inspired many innovative programs that aim to reduce and eradicate poverty by breaking the intergeneration cycle of poverty through education. Conditional cash transfer programs can be good example in this regard.

**Keywords**

School dropout, enrollment, social exclusion, an interlocking framework

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# Introduction

Although the last decades witnessed increased attention to the issue of education, supported by many research studies which show a positive relation between education, economic growth and poverty reduction as the human capital theory explains, others stress the importance of education as a prerequisite for development especially for developing countries where the number of illiterate people is high.

Despite all the efforts that have been made at the national and international levels, children still keep leaving schools in many countries in such manner that makes the possibility for the policies that aim to achieve universal basic education for all the children by 2015 more difficult.

The lack of opportunities for many groups of people to access and exercise their basic rights has remained a serious challenge for many states, particularly in developing countries. Many governments in Africa failed to meet their obligations to provide the basic needs such as food, health, security and education to their citizens, or to reduce their vulnerability to the incidences of poverty or crisis and natural disasters or man-made ones.

School dropouts at basic level of education, stands as a significant challenge for the national and international institutions together, in order to fulfill their duties towards children by enabling them to enjoy their right to education, which is ensured by the United Nation Convention of Rights of Child (UNCRC).

With special reference to basic education system in developing countries, the paper attempts to study the phenomenon of school dropouts at the basic level of education in Sudan, a country that struggles with increasing rates of students who are leaving school. However, the phenomenon has extended the normal limits during the last decade as revealed by the federal ministry of education which described it as a serious threat for the country to achieve universal basic education for all the children of school age. This pushed some international organizations to initiate interventions to prevent school dropouts, the European Union initiative to prevent school dropouts in East Sudan is one example. School dropouts as a phenomenon in Sudan does not look that different than in other developing countries and especially in African countries, although the phenomenon in Sudan has further specific dimensions, due to internal social, economic and political factors. This research tries to find an answer for the following question ; why do children drop out of basic education system in Sudan? This question could not be answered separately before other sub-questions related to the phenomenon of school dropouts such as; what are the reasons that underlie school dropouts in Sudan; are there any factors involved in creating this phenomenon that need to be investigated; and how can the disparity of school dropouts in terms of gender be explained? Lastly, there is also a set of questions regarding the reaction of the government towards school dropouts, such as how does the government respond, and to what extend are state interventions successful in dealing with the issue of school drop outs?

The government of Sudan has declared a National Policy of Education for All (NPEFA), aiming to make basic education accessible to all the children of school age (which is six years old in Sudan) by 2015. School fees have been abolished, the number of teachers that have been employed has increased and others have been recruited as volunteers, with training opportunities extended to them. The government has also launched a national campaign to mobilize the efforts of the societies to contribute in the implementation of the NPEFA. As a result, there has been a significant rise in the rates of enrollment that have been recorded, this has been joined with increment in the number of teachers and schools as well. Although the phenomenon of school dropouts has become one of the serious problems challenging the efforts that aim to make basic education accessible for all children in Sudan, (Ministry of Education 2003), school dropouts is not the only problem that hinders the state effort to achieve the goal. The low rates of school enrollment which appear in the reports of the federal ministry of education at the national level in general and in certain areas more particularly (Educational Statistics, Education Statistics & Planning Directorate et al. 2009), show that almost half of the children of school age in the country remain away from school.

This paper argues that in Sudan there is a systematic exclusion of millions of children from enjoying their basic right of education, which clearly represents a direct violation of the child’s right that is specified in the UNCRC as well as in the constitution of Sudan (2008). The continuing process of educational exclusion has generated a systematic process of social exclusion as well. Many groups of people are unable to enjoy their social rights and are unable to contribute effectively in social activities, which result in many forms of inequalities such as income and intellectual inequalities. Education is considered to be a significant factor that enables individuals to better their lives, as quoted from: “The right to education is thus a fundamental empowering right that is an essential bridge to these basic capabilities and the exercise of civil, political and economic and social rights”.

The government effort that deals with the problem seems to be not sufficient. It is not transparent too and has failed to provide the public with information on the situation. This has led to the intervention of an international organization (Amany 2013). It appears that the educational statistics annually reported by the federal ministry of education, have not provided the number of school dropouts for several years: namely the annual reports for the educational years of 2004 \_\_ 2005 and 2008 \_\_ 2009 (Educational Statistics, Education Statistics & Planning Directorate et al. 2009). The problem has not got the required attention and there has been no mobilization to respond to it; simply the government does not prioritize the problem of school dropouts. However the increasing rates of children who dropout from schools at the basic level is an issue in violation of UNCRC in which some of children have been deprived of their right to education. This raises also the question about issues of equity and social justice. Many people are being excluded from enjoying their social rights including basic education on the bases of financial means, gender, religion and the geographical area where they live. The exclusion of a group of citizens to enjoy their social rights and which results in negative consequences starts with school dropouts and may lead to social inequality and poverty. Therefore some authors argue that the economic and political instability in the country is strongly linked to the issue of marginalization and the imbalanced distribution of resources. These, according to (Lubna 2011) have put the country on a bloody conflict for more than three decades.

In order to understand how the basic education system in Sudan works, and to explore what are the reasons that are pushing students out of school, this paper analyses secondary data. A considerable amount of data has been collected from different sources including reports from the government of Sudan, United Nations Agencies (UNICEF & UNISCO), and other organizations such as studies done by Academic institutions in addition to journal reports and published interviews by the media. This paper attempts to employ a social exclusion approach as the main framework to analyze the multiple factors and processes that had caused many students to be pushed out of the education system and to be deprived to exercise their right as children.

This paper starts with reviewing the education policy in Sudan particularly the NPEFA as the main policy for the basic education since 2000. In respect to the issues of access, relevance and quality and how these are linked to the problem of school dropouts, the paper points out the socio-economic, political and cultural factors that are involved in determining school dropouts. After assessing the state policy responding to the problem, the paper suggests some strategies and programs that show positive effects in dealing with the problem based on experiences from some other countries. However the paper considers that since the phenomenon of school dropouts is not such a simple and separate problem but a multi-dimension problem connected to multiple factors such as socio-economic, political and cultural factors that have strong influences that make the problem more complicated. Therefore, the solution of the problem will not be simple and will require multiple solutions to deal with all factors that are related to the phenomenon, which further research for this purpose will be required.

## Research justification

School dropout has come up as a hot issue of debate and gets increase concern in previous decades from researchers and policy makers. This concern built on the assumption that, school dropout is a challenge of universal education which a lot of emphasis has been made on its significance to economic growth and poverty reduction strategies.

In Sudan, dropout of school is permanent issue that raises whenever speech open on economic, socio-cultural, politics and security in most cases, this take part in casual discussion, security meeting and workshops, or conflict resolution and reconciliation conferences. The reports of the federal ministry of education in addition to what have been stating by the ministry senior offers brings school dropout especially at level of basic education is a big concern challenging the national policy for education all. School dropout has affected negatively on state efforts to reach the MDG goal of universal primary education for all children at school age, which according to Kabaj, (2013) this is not possible for Sudan any more.

Based on the pre-search done by the author, whose background is NGO employee and volunteer teach, found that, there are remarkable contribution towards the issue school dropout by many authors. However, this study has carried out to add to the existent literature on school dropout in the sub-Saharan country of Sudan, which according to the study shares a lot of similarities rather than differences regarding the phenomenon, however school dropout in the country has more specific character in terms of the causal factors that influence it basic education level. There have been many authors highlighted school dropout as part of their topics within books such as (Adam, Musa et al. 2003), or within essays (Mudathir 2009), (Breidlid 2006), or as new reports in domestic press and media as reported by (Amany 2013), (Sahra 2011), (Hind 2013) and many others have been used in the study. The author has not succeeded to access more literature written specifically on school dropout at basic education in Sudan. in several libraries in Sudan such as Al Khatim Adlan Centre for human development and enlightenment, Centre of Sudanese Studies and the library of University of Khartoum. However, a part from one article published on Sudanese online web side by (M.Salih 2013), and other short comments and discussions on the social media such as Facebook and tweeter and blogs (Ayman 2013). In addition to this, the author communicated with number of education officers and experts to indicate if there is any written item about the study to topic. Internationally, school dropout in Sudan has been highlighted as well through many reports that carried out by several institutions such as UNICEF, UNDP, World Bank, IMF and other. Therefore this study will add to literature on school dropout in general, and more particular in Sudan where rare focus has been paid to school dropout, so the study contributes in filling a literature gap concerning school dropout as a phenomenon that challenge the efforts aiming to achieve universal basic education in Sudan.

## Research problem

The last decades witnessed an increase and strong concern towards education. This concern embodied through several initiative at the global level as well as at the regional and national levels, such as Education For All (EFA) in Dakar 2000 and the UPE which includes the MDGs as Goal no. 2, and The Girls and Women’s Education Initiative in 2005 globally while nationally in Sudan for instance government has adopted EFA and declared it through the National Policy of Education for All (NPEFA) (see chapter 3) in 2000. The reports of the federal ministry of Sudan have shown a significant progress has been achieved in terms of offering great opportunities to children of school age to access the education, especially with regards to enrolment of girls and children from rural areas. However, the NPEFA formulation and implementation has not been accompanied with much attention to factors of sustainability nor quality of education provision, which both are important components of the framework of human development.

Subsequently, the number of students who leaving schools has been rising in a way that makes school dropout as a serious problem challenges the state attempts to realize education for all. In the recent time where the importance of education to economic growth and poverty reduction has got wider recognition among academic researchers and policy makers, dropping out of schools appears on the other side as a real threat to achieve inclusive economic grow and reduce poverty. Whilst, its worthy to mention that the phenomenon might be seen as small or slight in terms of numbers, but it’s certainly wider among the poor which thereupon stands as obstacle towards breaking the cycle of intergenerational transmission of poverty (UNICEF 2010).

The literature shows that school dropouts as a phenomenon is considered to be one of the most serious problems that challenges the policy maker in field of education due to the complexity of the problem and the intersection of factors that are involved (See table. 8). School dropouts in the context of Sudan is the outcome of a gap in policy that fails to consider the factors already mentioned above in terms of providing equal opportunities to school children (Hamad 2012). This leads to a sort of classes or categories within the state education system where some groups of children enjoy their right to education, while others leave school either because of decisions taken by themselves or their families for reasons that may relate to socio-economic constraints on the family or for reasons that relate to education provision in terms of the quality of education facilities or the education process.

## Research objectives

The overall objective of this study is to explore the factors which structure the educational exclusion through the phenomenon of school drop out at the level of basic education. In addition to that, the study tries to examine the disparities of school dropout on the bases of gender, location and ability.

## Research questions

The paper attempts to answer the following question, as the main question of the research; ‘What factor/s influence school dropout in basic education in Sudan?’

The above mentioned question will be answered through the following sub-questions:

## How policy, socio-economic, socio-cultural and school-based factors interact with gender, location and ability to shape schooling in the country?

## What the implications of further inclusion educational policy in Sudan?

## Research methodology

The methodology

The data has been selected on two bases; firstly items that provide quantitative and qualitative data on economic, social, cultural and political aspects basically about Sudan. These items have been gathered from the government of Sudan such as statistical data from the ministry of education - reports during different periods of times e.g from 2000 to 2003 and from 2008 to 20010 (Ministry of Education 2003). Some data has been collected from SDCBC documents which include the Sudan census of 2008 updated in 2011 (SDCBC), including the economic, health, housing and poverty situation. In addition data has been taken from research papers which were do not specifically focus on school dropout (the research topic) but mention it and / or factors that influence school dropout, such as (Aslo) which views culture and belief factor and (Mudathir 2009)which sees poverty and the imbalance of health and education services as the underlying cause of low rates of school enrolment and high rates of school dropout. Data from newspapers reports/articles, published interviews with Sudanese experts and statements released by government and NGOs senior officers working in Sudan, in addition to civil society actors provide insight into the research problem and related factors. Using a social exclusion approach as the main framework of analysis, these have assisted much in understanding the process in which many people in society have been discriminated against, on bases of gender, ethnicity, ability and where they live. An imbalance of state provisioning of public service that shapes social exclusion has left many people unable to enjoy their social rights, and maintained them in poverty and deprivation. In this regard, according to (Yusuf Sayed, 2003, p:4) the debate on the concept of social exclusion is continuing in various contexts to find the its significance to deepen the understanding of injustice and inequality. The research carried out in this paper shows that, there is educational exclusion and that this occurs against a wide range of children on different bases, as mentioned above and informed by (Black book) (SPLA) (Hamid) (Yaseen). Taking two forms of social exclusion; active exclusion which takes place when the state’s policy and programs are designed and implemented purposefully so as to exclude groups of people, and passive exclusion which occurs as a result of, through a lack awareness of and ignorance among those people distanced by Sen, (2000) cited in (Okwany). The right to education has been used as a concept in which social exclusion is a refusal or disclaimer of people’s rights, which included the Universal declaration of human rights and more detailed in civil, political and social rights and economic protocols. The right to education is considered as a fundamental right because of the significant role that education plays in enabling individuals to enjoy their other rights (..).

While numerous texts have been selected from the literature that inform the field of study, concern in areas of social policy such as (Ref….), and issues of poverty as a cause and result. This literature has assisted greatly in broadening this paper and exploring the link between school dropout in the context of Sudan in relation to the concepts of poverty, right-based and capability.

In order to explore the factors that influence school dropout, geographical comparisons have been established between six regional states in the country (Rive Nile, Northern, South Darfur, West Darfur, Qadarif and Red Sea). The comparisons operated for two periods of time, the first during the years 2000 to 2003. This period was chosen intentionally to show the disparities in school enrolment and school dropout rates between two states located in the northern side of the country (Rive Nile, Northern), with two states in the west side ( South Darfur, West Darfur) when there was no conflict. The conflict in Darfur commenced in 2003, at which point, it would be quite difficult not to relate the phenomenon of school dropout with the conflict and instability. While the other comparison established between the centre and the peripheral regions, (advantages and disadvantages) a disparity which is commonly cited as a one of the main causes of inequality leading to discontent and conflict in Sudan. In addition to this, qualitative data on socio-economic and socio-cultural factors has been analysed.

This paper relied basically on secondary data that was collected from various sources. The main source of the statistical data is the Sudan Federal Ministry of Education and Sudan Central Bureau of Statistics (SDCBC). Reports from the ministry carry statistical data on school enrolment, dropout, and repeaters across basic schooling grades, which assisted much to identify where dropout hits highest within the schooling cycle (grades), as well as it shows the disparities according to gender and area. The SDCBS data such as the Sudan census of 2008 updated in 2011 data, provides useful statistical data on population size, household and housing, economic, health and education.

Considerable data has been gathered as well from other sources such as UN Agencies, World Bank, IMF, International Education Council in Geneva, NGOs and Academic and research institutions. The data includes reports, studies, policy documents, newspaper and magazine articles, press releases and published interviews, videos gathered from books, newspapers, Magazines, Radio, TV, websites and You tube films. Empirical, statistical, textual and audial visual data has been reviewed and critically assessed in this paper

The paper adopts a combination method of quantitative study for the sake of objectivity, in addition to a qualitative method which provides deep understanding of the context of the study. This helps in describing and characterizing the problem, as well as facilitated the answering of the questions of the research. However, it is really challenging to carry out this research from secondary data which is not often available online regarding Sudan for instance, while doing it from outside the country makes it more challenging. In addition to the unavailability of data especially form the government side, the reliability and accurateness of data and information remains questionable (Aikman, Rao 2012) ( Ref), which generates a lot of work to cross check and collect information from other sources, such as NGOs, the press and media, and civil society and sometimes from individuals (Adam). In facing these challenges, the author was assisted by contacts such as education officers in Sudan who managed to bring items from Sudan including reports from the ministry of education from 2000 to 2010, the NPEFA, a number of books by Sudanese authors highlight the issues of the research concern. Regarding the matter of contradiction and reliability, there is a sub-chapter under this name has been allocated, viewing the contradictory information.

## Scope of the paper

This research paper focuses on two dimensions, firstly to highlight the gap of educational provision, and secondly, to represent a critical view to the state policy of education provisioning that has divided children in Sudan to those who are lucky and those who are unlucky children the latter of whom are pushed out of the school system, regardless of whether this division has been created intentionally or non-intentionally. Since many researchers have shown the strong importance of education in developing and promoting human capital which impacted positively on economic growth, poverty reduction, health, security, effective participation, and more other aspect of the human life, therefore this study fits into the field of development in general and social policy for development in particular.

## Structure of the paper

This study is presented into four chapters spread out in a sequence, in line with the objectives of the research. The first chapter, gives an introduction to the research topic in general, and the processes that follow in the paper. The second chapter, describes the methods that have been used to study the phenomenon of school dropouts in Sudan. The third chapter, mainly provides the theoretical and conceptual frameworks based on the literature connected to the research topic. While the fourth chapter, discusses the research topic (school dropouts) and the underlying factors specifically in the context of Sudan, supported by analysed data from government reports. Lastly, chapter five presents the findings of the paper followed by suggestions of some strategies and programs that could assist in dealing with the problem, then the paper concludes with recommendations.

# Basic information about education in Sudan

This chapter provides some information about Sudan as a background in the first part, while the second part highlights the education system in Sudan with special focus on the national policy of education for all (NPEFA) which is considered to be the main education policy since the early 2000s.

### 1.1 Background on the country’s socio-demography, politics and economic characteristics

Sudan lies in the North Eastern part of Africa, neighboring six countries, Chad and Central Africa Republic from the West, Ethiopia and Eritrea from the East, Egypt and Libya from the North, and the Republic of South Sudan from the South. According to the decentralization rule system which was adopted in 1994, the country consists of 17 regional states and 184 localities spread on 1.882.00 square kilometer.

The country is populated by 34 million people representing various ethnicities and cultures, 32.7% of them live in urban areas, while 67.3% are living in rural areas and 8% out of them are nomads. 45.6 % of the population under 15 years, 16.4 % of them are under 5 years (5,540,000 children), the rate of population growth is 2.8 according to Sudan consensus of 2008.

According to the human development report, Sudan classified as the 154 country which is one of the countries that has the lowest level of human development in the world. The annual income per person is 1335 US$, and the unemployment rate is 19%. The report that Sudan achieved with UNDP in 2010, shows that 46% of its citizens live under the poverty line, 14% live in absolute poverty, the malnutrition rate is 16.4% which exceeds the international emergency rate (15%) (Ref).

Sudan has suffered from political instabilities, since independence in 1956 up to today. Out of the 57 years of the post-colonial period, the country has been ruled by dictatorship and non-democratic regimes with exception of ten short years during the years 1956\_ 1958, 1963\_ 1969, and 1985 to 1989. The country has witnessed a violent conflict in the forms of civil war for more than forty years, which is considered the longest war in the continent

### 1.1.1 How the education system in Sudan works

The beginning of modern education is associated with the English-Egyptian colonial period, which established the administrative of the knowledge in 1900 and which included objectives for education such as the creation of a competent artisan class, which was entirely lacking, and the creation of a small native administrative class to fill in the minor government positions. Train Sudanese to replace the Egyptian in the army and Syrians in the junior administrative positions (Siddiek 2011). After independence in 1956, the system continued until 1969 when some changes were implemented by Arab ministers at an education conference that recommended that all Arab countries should unify their education ladder to six-three-three years (primary- intermediate- secondary).

The current education system was built on the rubble of the previous one and was launched officially in 1990 with the new strategic goal of: “To establish indigenous education system that unifies the sources and objectives and include all factors that build the Sudanese character and provides spiritual and ideological potentialities… to respond to any new situation” (Siddiek2011). The objectives of the new system are; firstly, to establish religious belief in students, and raise them accordingly, and build their individual and collective behaviour, guided by the teachings of religion, to assist in the creation of social, economic and political values based on good behaviour that are based on the teachings of the God. Secondly strengthening the spirit of national unity in the hearts of young people, and develop a sense of loyalty to the homeland, and giving whatever lifts it. Thirdly to build a society of self-dependent and release of physical and spiritual energies latent in the country, and popularize the ambition to restore our leading civilization as a nation of a message. Fourthly, to develop environmental sense among young people, and teaching them that the environment is one of the blessings of God, which must be maintained and development and should be used in a good way to avoid drought, desertification and other environmental disasters. And lastly to enable the learner to gain the right understanding of the concepts; democracy and Shoura2, just and comprehensive peace, sense of responsibility, freedom, and human self-understanding, rights and duties, within the framework of educational policy and the national interest (Siddiek2011).

The education ladder was changed in 1992 from six-three-three (primary- intermediate- secondary) to 8-3 called (basic- secondary), besides pre-education which is added to the educational structure (Pre-education- basic- secondary). The children join pre-education level from four to five years, basic school from six to 13 years and secondary school from 14 to 16 years (Educational Planning 2001:12). The length of te learning period is 210 days out of the year as identified by the Federal Ministry of Education while the Education Planning Law of 2000 gives states the right to decide on the beginning of academic year according to their conditions (Ministry of Education 2003:30)

The decentralization system that has been implemented in 1994 has created three levels for rule; the federal, state and local governments, concerning education the federal ministry of education provides the technical support such as planning the policies, training, monitoring the education operation, preparing and developing curriculums. The ministry at the state level is carrying out the implementation tasks, which include establishing the schools and approving supervisors for examinations. The local level is responsible for delivering the education services. At the federal level, there is a minister, nine directors and forty-nine managers, and five specialists in the regional states in addition to the general director. In the locality, there is a director of the basic education (Ministry of Education 2003: 6).

The reports of the federal ministry of years 1990 to 20001 show a sustainable increment over ten years in the gross enrolment by 2.9% for both sexes (2.7 of the boys and 3.2 of the girls). The rates of enrolment of girls also have witnessed increased from 42.8% in 1990 to 46% in 2000 and that led to rose in the parity index between the boys and girls from 0.75 in 1990 to 0.85 in 2000 (See table: 1, figure: 1). However, the gender gap is still in place at the national level, while it is wider with some states at the regional level (See Table no. I, figure no. 1).

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 1: The progress in basic school enrolment during the period 1990 to- 2001. | | | | | | | |
| **Year** | **Boys** | **Girls** | **Total** |  |  |  |  |
| 1990- 1991 | 239223 | 180017 | 419240 |  |  |  |  |
| 2000-2001 | 319596 | 255566 | 575162 |  |  |  |  |
| Gross rate | 2.70% | 3.20% | 2.9 |  |  |  |  |
| *Source: Administrative of planning- SudanFederal Ministry of Education* | | | | | | |  |

Figure 1: Figure : The rose of girls’ enrolment during the period 1990 to 2001.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| *Source: Administrative of planning- Sudan Federal Ministry of Education* |  |

The increment includes number of teachers and schools

Figure 2: Figure No. 2: The number of population between 6 to 13 years by states in 2001-2002

*Source: Administrative of planning- Sudan Federal Ministry of Education*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 2: Table No. 2: Percentages of enrolment within the states and their proportion to national percentage of enrolment in year 2001- 2002 | | | |
| **State** | **Percentage of enrolment to Sudan** | **Percentage of enrolm- ent in state** | **% of state population size to population of Sudan** |
|
| *Northren* | *3.4%* | *103.4%* | *1.7%* |
| *River Nile* | *4.7%* | *87.3%* | *2.80%* |
| Khartoum | 20.9% | 87.5% | 12.20% |
| *Gazira* | *16.9%* | *83.1%* | *10.4* |
| Blue Nile | 1.6% | 42.0% | 2.10% |
| Sinnar | 4.7% | 61.5% | 4% |
| White Nile | 6.0% | 63.1% | 5% |
| North Kordufan | 3.9% | 64.7% | 5.40% |
| South Kordufan | 2.9% | 40.5% | 4.20% |
| West Kordufan | 3.9% | 49.3% | 4.10% |
| *North Darfur* | *5.2%* | *52.5%* | *5%* |
| *South Darfur* | *6.1%* | *37.4%* | *9.40%* |
| *West Darfur* | *3.0%* | *34.7%* | *5.60%* |
| Red Sea | 2.6% | 59.9% | 2.20% |
| Kassala | 3.9% | 46.1% | 4.60% |
| *Gadarif* | *4.6%* | *50.7%* | *4.70%* |
| ***Sudan*** | ***94.30%*** | ***57.60%*** |  |
| *Source: Administrative of planning- SudanFederal Ministry of Education* | | | | |  |

Figure No. 3: The education ladder

**Sudan educational ladder**

Higher education (Universities & Higher Institutes)

General education

Basic education

Secondary education (Academic/Technical

Basic education

Pre-schooling (Kindergarten/Khalwas)

Vocational

4

12

15

14

13

11

10

9

8

7

6

5

16

(4 to 5) (6 to 13)

**Ages**

Sources: the General Administrative of Planning, Sudan Federal Ministry of Education

Table 3: Number of Basic schools and average of the class by states in year 2000- 2001.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **State** | **Boys schools** | **Average of class** | **Girls schools** | **Average of class** | **Co-schools** | **Average of class** | **Mobile schools (Nomads)** | **Average of class** |
| ***Sudan*** | ***2836*** | ***48*** | ***2623*** | ***47*** | ***4854*** | ***41*** | ***651*** | ***24*** |
| Northren | 100 | 40 | 99 | 15 | 235 | 13 | 15 | 40 |
| River Nile | 178 | 39 | 168 | 16 | 205 | 15 | 29 | 26 |
| Khartoum | 522 | 59 | 513 | 22 | 247 | 23 | 0 | 0 |
| Gazira | 450 | 50 | 457 | 19 | 733 | 17 | 0 | 0 |
| Blue Nile | 32 | 63 | 27 | 25 | 97 | 26 | 5 | 29 |
| Sinnar | 121 | 56 | 112 | 24 | 200 | 20 | 6 | 17 |
| White Nile | 169 | 44 | 157 | 18 | 415 | 17 | 11 | 13 |
| North Kordufan | 167 | 53 | 183 | 22 | 474 | 16 | 75 | 22 |
| South Kordufan | 77 | 49 | 64 | 20 | 263 | 22 | 49 | 20 |
| West Kordufan | 88 | 40 | 81 | 22 | 335 | 19 | 91 | 38 |
| North Darfur | 208 | 37 | 191 | 18 | 251 | 21 | 86 | 18 |
| South Darfur | 220 | 22 | 165 | 35 | 391 | 35 | 170 | 20 |
| West Darfur | 39 | 43 | 25 | 28 | 356 | 20 | 71 | 25 |
| Red Sea | 113 | 48 | 102 | 19 | 68 | 16 | 14 | 19 |
| Kassala | 134 | 51 | 108 | 21 | 110 | 19 | 5 | 53 |
| Gadarif | 141 | 48 | 138 | 51 | 211 | 19 | 24 | 26 |

*Source: Educational statistics 2000-2001, Sudan Federal Ministry of Education*

### 1.1.2 The National Policy of Education for All (NPEA)

After the world Summit in New York 2000, The president of Sudan Government declared a universal primary education policy, under the theme “Education for all” in 2000, aiming to promote full participation in primary education for all the children of schooling age by the year 2015 (Ministry of Education and -Republic of Sudan 2003:1). The national policy of education for all formulated in 2003, contains various educational programs and activities that aim to meet the needs of a wide sector of the community and its categories. NPEA includes basic education and the lower phases of secondary education in addition to irregular programs for youth and adults (Ministry of Education 2003: 30).

Concerning finance, NPEA was established on the principle of participation of education funding by the state, civil society organization and the private sector. NPEA targeted 50% of the education total budget, which equates to 6% of all public spending on education. It expects the fund of the budget to be contributions from the state 65%, civil society organizations 10% and the international community with 20%. NPEA will be implemented in two phases, phase one is the first five years starting in 2003 to 2007 aims to universalize basic education by 90% while the second phase starting in 2008 to 2015 aims to achieve a percentage of school enrollment above than 84%. The estimated budget to achieve the aims of phase one for instance is one billion and 92.8 million US$.

NPEA highlighted four challenges that affect the effective implementation of the plan. Firstly; the conflict in the southern region has been real challenge to provide universal basic education to all children. Secondly, at the local level scarcity and limited financial resources as the main constrains. However decreasing of the foreign aid made it more complicated. Thirdly; the provision of appropriate and balanced educational inputs especially for places of less opportunity, where there is a scarcity of resources. Lastly; drawing a clear and permanent educational mapping whilst a demographic movement for both voluntary and coercive to and from the country continues, (Ministry of Education 2003).

#### NPEA objectives;

* Expand and improve the education at the early childhood level, with special focus on vulnerable deprived children such as children of nomads and those affected by conflicts and natural disasters;
* Ensure the provision of free and the completion of basic education for all children of six to 13 years old with special focus on girls and children in difficult situations. Targeting universal basic education by 90% in order to exceed the rate of schooling intake over 80% by 2015;
* Improve all aspects of education quality and ensure a distinction for all in order to achieve recognized and measurable results; and
* Elimination of all gender disparities in education opportunities at basic and secondary levels by 2006, and achieve perfect equality by 2015.

#### NPEA Principles:

* Commitment to the principle of basic education as a right for all;
* Provide education with good quality for all;
* Commit to the principle of gender equality and geographical balance in distribution of educational inputs;
* Commit to the principle of equal opportunity to access education system regular and irregular;
* Commit to the principle of community participation in funding education for all; and
* Provide fair opportunities to disadvantaged categories such as nomads and the victims of conflicts and disasters to benefit from the service of education for all.

As mentioned above, the reports of the Federal Ministry of Education of 2005 show remarkable efforts have been made to bridge gender disparities at the national level, (see figures 2). However it is much worthy here to mention that, the national picture is hiding the reality of that disparity in certain areas, which not surprisingly, these areas are not associated only with gender disparities but with the lowest rates of enrolment and high rates of dropouts as well (see table 2), in addition to low academic performance not only at the level of basic education but also at the secondary level where all students pass through unified examinations nationally (table, figure, figure). These issues bring the above questions about ….

# The conceptual framework

### Introduction

During the last few decades, an increased attention has been paid to the education issue, with particular focus on basic education, which is internationally recognized as a human right since the issue of the universal declaration of human rights in 1948. After one decade the declaration was followed by the UNESCO Convention against Discrimination in Education (UNESCO 2012) which stresses the realization of equal education opportunities for all and for children in particular, and gives much attention to issue of discrimination. The international efforts towards ensuring education as a child right continued until the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Child (UNCRC) in 1989, which was extensively ratified by almost all members of the UN except two countries, United States and Somalia. Since then the convention and its attached supplementary instruments (Beijing Rules & the Riyadh Guidelines) added a global consideration to the rights of children in general and became the main pillar for child rights (Banks 2012, p: 1). Regarding education UNCRC ensured and stressed basic education as a right for all children without discrimination and regardless of race, culture.

Advocating education at global and local levels through international institutions, national government and NGOs has resulted in innumerable initiatives, policy documents, media and academic research. Beside advocating education as a right, it is also considered as a prerequisite for development even (Zeelen, eds 2010). A lot of studies show the importance of education as a right and the significant role that education plays in the economic, social, political and cultural spheres. The collaboration and coordination of efforts of international, regional and national actors mentioned above have resulted in strong/fruitful initiatives such as the MDGs (Ref), Education for all (EFA) (Ref), The United Nations Literacy Decade ( UNLD) (Ref), The Girls and Women’s Education Initiative in 2005 in addition to The United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). These initiatives as quoted, (Zeelen, eds 2010): “These five initiatives have in common the idea that education is a key to enabling people (men and women, boys and girls) to fulfil their potential and take greater control over decisions that affect them. Education is seen as a fundamental human right and a prerequisite for development”.

### Definition of the concept

Dropout is a common term that has been used by many authors to describe the phenomenon of students leaving school. This paper conceptualizes the term of ***school dropout*** as the actions which lead students to leave school regardless of the reasons behind the decision or the factors that have influenced it. The decision of leaving school might be taken by the student, the family or as a result of school organization, state policy or other factors such as environmental circumstances. The paper uses also ***School dropout rate*** to refer to

the proportion of students who admitted and registered in school then they left before completing the basic school course, to those who succeed to complete the course. While using the ***Rate of school dropout within grades*** to refer to the proportion of students who admitted and registered at certain grade, but they left school before promoted to the next grade.

However the concept has been conceptualized by many authors who prefer to use numerous of terms to describe the phenomenon. For instance use ‘early school leaving’ and ‘early school leavers’ and define it as the following: “Early school leavers are learners who fail to complete their full cycle of schooling” (Zeelen, eds 2010, p:20). The term used to give the meaning that relates to ‘dropping out’ and ‘drop-outs’ as Zeleen explains, highlights that they have chosen the mentioned term ‘early school leaving’ because of an intersection of the political and educational systems and other factors which are related to the phenomenon. Zeleen mentioned that, some researchers see that there are negative conotations of the term ‘drop-out’ which indicates students are dropping out of school, it points just one part of the decision to drop out (Conen & Rutten, 2003, cited in (Zeelen, eds 2010)). In this regard, Zeelen raises a question about the role of the school system towards the issue of dropouts, does the school system push out student or not? The response to this question comes from several researchers who discussed the term ‘push-outs’ in addition to other terms which are generally use such as ‘displaced youth’, ‘out- of- school youth’, ‘marginalized youth’, and ‘raw youth’. The latest term was generated by B.S. Kajunjumele, one of Tanzanian’s trade unions founders, he used the term to describe the unemployed young people walking around in the urban areas in Africa. (Zeelen, eds 2010, p: 4).

Zeelen mentioned also the critical use of terminology particularly in Africa like ‘never- enrolled’, which refers to the people who have never gone to school, and specially the girls. Zeelen sees that one universal definition for school dropouts will not be helpful due to the variety of reasons and factors that are involved, and which take different shapes from country to another. However they consider that the conceptualization of the definition seems to be important within certain contexts, therefore “a fruitful discussion about terms, definitions and the criteria for level of qualification should continue to be part of the ongoing research and interaction between relevant stakeholders involved in education, the community, business and policy structures in specific contexts” (Zeelen, eds 2010).

Although national governments and international organizations are putting more efforts to provide equal access to primary education for all children of school age by 2015, students drop out of school becomes a serious challenge for achieving the UPE in many countries around the world.

## Why school dropout is a concern?

According to Thompson (2001), “basic education refers to learning outcomes, i.e. knowledge and skills acquisition and application, positive attitudes formation, internalization and exhibition of values for a variety of life – and work-enhancing purposes and for the good that is inherent in knowledge itself”. He sees that the main purpose of basic education is: to meet basic needs and to facilitate and enhance the exercise of basic rights (p: 4).

Concerning the phenomenon in the United States, (Rumberger 2001) sees dropouts in the US is a concern for the government because it costs the nation money. He sees that it is not easy to students who dropout to hold well-paid jobs which keeps them away from state assistance. He indicates that dropouts are a recent concern because it has effects on economic and demographic aspects, which could exacerbate problems in the long run. One of these concerns for instance is that the economy of the US is moving towards a high skilled labor force, he sees that dropouts from high school may damage the economy and “will have an even harder time surviving economically” ( Murnane & Levy, 1996) cited in (Rumberger 2001). While the demographic trend appears that students from minorities groups such as poor, low income families, certain racial, ethnic and linguistic categories, are at a great risk of school failure and are increasing in number (Levin, 1986; Natriello et al., 1990) cited in (Rumberger 2001). Rumberger mentioned dropouts of high school and sees that has negative implications for the economic growth, but this paper argues that dropouts of schools at the basic level has greater negative impact than at the higher level, because good quality basic education helps children to face life’s challenges while weak basic education effects the future progression of children (Das, Kuyini et al. 2013).

Openjuru sees that the phenomenon of school dropouts need a real concern, because ideally all individuals should have an equal opportunity to schooling that ends with a recognized certificate which shows the person has acquired a qualification and is able to do what has been mentioned as vocation or career in life (Zeelen, eds 2010, p:20). Openjuru points out that in Uganda for instance school dropouts is a matter for the whole society whether people are rich or poor, generally people who drop out of school seen as losers and face a kind of stigma from society instead of sympathy or any kind of help “In most cases, early school leavers are seen as losers and they are stigmatized by society rather than assisted” (Zeelen, eds 2010p:20). Whereas Likewise, Felipe (2009) points that if, countries do not provide reasonable support to education and training, and the outcome will be unskilled workers. He argues that in this sense, the market does not lead to the best outcome, but it may reinforce this weakness of labour by providing fewer incentives to acquire to make more gains. While in other countries where there are strong education and training institutions and high skilled labour, the free market contributes more effectively to encourage people to become skilled (Felipe 2009, p: 276). Felipe asserts that; “One of the most important consequences of the deficiency in training is that a lack of skilled worker trained workers leads to the manufacture and export of relatively poor quality and low value products. The manufacture of high quality products requires highly … different outputs require different types training”, (Felipe 2009, p: 276), (cited the author essay 2013, p: 5).

## Why do children dropout of school??

This question is considered as the main question for this paper. However it is not an easy job to find a very direct and precise answer to it, because the of issue of school dropouts does not relate to one factor which leads to an answer, but probably relates to multiple factors take different dimensions and forms from one place and society to another. Therefore the reasons that push students to leave school could be very personal decisions or non-personal such as economic, political, cultural factors, as some studies from many countries are showing how very different reasons associate to school dropouts have been explored:

According to the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 for the eighth graders in US, there are various reasons that have been found which reflect the complexity of the issue of school dropout. The study found that the reasons which were school –related were 77 percent, and 34 percent were family related, 32 percent work related, and specific reasons such as “did not like school” or “failing school” were 46 and 39 percent (Berktold et al., 1998) cited in (Rumberger 2001). Rumberger argues that these reasons do not explain the root causes behind the phenomenon of leaving school “particularly those causes or factors that long ago may have contributed to students attitudes, behaviors, and school performance immediately preceding their decision to leave school” (pp: 4,5). He continues to argue that

“If many factors contribute to this phenomenon over a long period of time, it is virtually impossible to demonstrate a causal connection between any single factor and the decision to quit school.” (p: 5).

## Gender parity

In sub-Saharan Africa, over that half of all girls (54%) do not complete their primary education and, and 17% join secondary education.

Although, gender equality has been included in in most of the national constitutions and international conventions, Sheila see that, education today characterized with extensive inequalities based on gender and, the precise meaning of gender inequality in relation to education has not been clear enough. Sheila explicate gender inequality as respect of human rights and “ a set of ethical demands for securing the conditions for all people men and women, to live a full life” (p:3).

Gender parity as Aikman and Elaine, (2005) describe, that “the same proportions of girls and boys enter and complete schooling”

Building on Sen’s ‘capability approach’, Aikman and Elaine, (2005) point that, achieving gender equality requires process to develop freedoms of the individuals, regarding to gender and other indications of discrimination, which enable them to take actions, choose inspiration and trait what they have reason to value.

Girls in many countries usually challenge by number of barriers to attain education. Many households in respect to girls education see that, the economic benefits that they receive from education is much lower than the social benefit that returns, it consider even lower than the boys (p:36). As Aikman and Elaine, (2005) see, cultural and social beliefs, attitudes, and practices block girls to benefit from the opportunities of education to the same standard as the boys (36). Issue of parental decision concerning schooling is quite complicated and in many countries especially developing countries tend to be in boys favour then girls as recent surveys show (36). While many communities consider marriage is higher priority than education, which brings early marriage as one of barriers that constrains girl’s education. However, in the context of some communities in Sudan, there is high preference in marriage toward those who attain several years at schooling.

## Approaches of the paper

### Social exclusion approach

This paper uses a social exclusion as a key framework to analyse the reasons that are pushing students to drop out of school and keeps others away from the reach of school.

The paper through using this approach focuses on the process by which groups of children are excluded from enjoying their right to education, which results in mega social exclusion as the paper describes for a wide range of citizen as in the context of Sudan. As (Awortwi, Okwany 2010) sees; social exclusion is the denial of civil, political and social rights of citizenship.

According to (Fischer 2011) social exclusion as defined by many authors is strongly connected to poverty, “exclusion explicitly or implicitly as poverty or as processes leading to poverty”. For instance, Gore and Figueiredo (1997, p. 17) summarise the number of definitions that are used by many country studies commissioned by the IILS in the 1990s. Most of these studies defined social exclusion implicitly as capability or entitlement failure. For instance the Tanzania study defines social exclusion as both a state equivalent to relative deprivation and as processes of socially determined impediments to access resources, social goods or institutions, while the India study defines it as a denial of the basic welfare rights that provide citizens positive freedoms. The Thailand study defines it as a non-recognition or disrespect for the citizenship rights on which livelihood and living standards depend. The Yemen study defines it as social segregation, whereby some individuals and groups are not recognized as full and equal members of society, cited in (Fischer 2011). Gore and Figueiredo see that an analytical value comes from its elucidation of social processes which contribute to social inequality. In other words, all of these country studies essentially treat with social exclusion as contextually- defined forms of relative or capability poverty” (P: 7). According to the document of the NPEFA a clear emphasis is on equal opportunity for education to all, regardless their sex, race, religious, culture, economic or social background. However there are quite necessary issues that should be noticed when the focus turns to the implementation of education policy on the ground. This is what the paper discusses in the next chapter. As the UNESCO has mentioned in the report of 2012:

*“The discussions focus on how children progress, through the education system – from entry to completion. The data show that compulsory education, even where government mandated, is a goal which is far from being met and that many children, especially the most disadvantaged, are still excluded from schooling.”(UNESCO 2012, p: 9).*

In the context of Sudan, social exclusion as has been seen connects strongly to the areas where people live; in addition to the factors such as socio-economic, socio-culture and school but with lower connection than the geographical one which generates significant impact towards the stability and social cohesion. The exclusion of generations in certain regions in Sudan from the right to education which a fundamental right that through individuals could empowered and have stronger say towards the decisions that affect their lives, this deprivation creates what is known among Sudanese politicians and media by marginalized areas which refers to Western and Southern Regions of Sudan in addition to Eastern region which include three states of Red Sea, Qadarif and Kassala.

As … points that, social exclusion generates a perception by which some social groups or communities alienated from mainstream of the society (Ref 3). Those people who live in disadvantage areas have been distanced also and detached to participation effectively in the economic, social and economic and other domains which means they subjected to active social exclusion as the Council of EU defines social exclusion as; “a broader concept than poverty, encompassing not only low material means but the inability to participate effectively in economic, social, political and cultural life and in some characterizations alienation and distance from mainstream society”.

Social exclusion approach has been used by the paper also to capture the processes that disempowered and alienated wider groups of Sudanese citizen, and associated them with higher rates of poverty, illiteracy, maternal mortality, children under five ages, see (table no.., figure no…). The approach used likewise to highlight the link between the above indicators and the phenomenon of school dropout particularly.

### Rights-based analysis

The right to basic education has acquired strong and intensive recognition nationally and at international level. Many conventions, declaration, initiatives and policy documents and papers have been launched at international levels all stressing the right to education. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) has mentioned the right to education which is supposed to be free for all at least the basic level (article 26-(1)), and has emphasised the issue of equity and accessibility for the public service (article 21-(2)). The UNESC Convention against the Discrimination in Education (1966) stressed an importance of equal opportunity and non-discriminatory policies of practices towards the children’s right to education. In 1989 all the UN members signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) with exception of (United States and Somalia), which makes it one of the most extensive conventions. According to (Banks 2012) the UNCRC and the two supplementary instruments that attached to it (Beijing Rules and the Riyadh Guidelines) it created international norms for child rights which led to the globalization of child rights and protection including a mandate to apply restorative justice (Banks 2012). At the national level, the Constitution of Republic of Sudan has mentioned the right to education for children (Item no. 13-1-a, 13-1-b). This paper has adopted a rights-based framework to assess the provision of education in terms of quality and quantity, through which this paper finds out the extent to which the state of Sudan is meeting its commitment towards the UNCRC which points clearly the obligation of the state to recognize the right to education for all children. This in addition to the national obligation according to its own constitution which ensures as compulsory, free and equitable basic education for all children in the country as a right of citizenship. This approach considers children as the right holders who deserve to enjoy their rights and the right to basic education in particular within the context of the paper. A right- based approach points-out the responsibility and accountability of the duty bearers, as mentioned by Thompson (2001); that state governments are responsible to provide the basic needs such food, water, health, security and education as primary duty (Ref). Therefore according to a rights-based framework, the responsibility and accountability of duty bearers starts from the national level (the state) then includes the institutions involved at the regional or international level.

According to Thompson (2001); the rights-based approach to basic education builds on that, duty bearers should meet their obligations and duties to enable individuals to exercise their rights. He indicates the importance of basic education as the mean/tool that facilitates the exercising and the enjoyment of the other rights of basic need. Thompson explains further that the duty bearers and particularly the state does not expect just to provide opportunities for people to exercise their rights but make sure that all individuals have exercised their rights through appropriate measures which should be taken for this purpose, pointing that without good governance that will not be achieved; “Without good governance mismanagement attempts to provide basic needs and efforts to facilitate the exercise of basic rights will be hamstrung”. (P: 4).

The right to education is considered as a fundamental right because of the significant role that education plays in enabling individuals to enjoy their other rights. The right to education as an essential key that empowers individuals to acquire/attain the basic capabilities, and ability to enjoy their social rights as is mentioned in Sen’s capability approach (p: 138) (Sen 2000). emphasises the role of the state as the main duty bearer to protect children rights through effective policies and strategies. According to (Awortwi, Okwany 2010, 139) this will not be the responsibility of the state alone but civil society organizations (CSOs), parents and children should share the responsibility with the state in the light of the principles that are emphasised by the UNCRC. These include three aspects; firstly, universal rights for all children and should be accessible for all as well, according to (Awortwi, Okwany 2010, 139), the emphasis here is on an equitable and inclusive policies are practices highly needed. While the second emphasis is on “indivisibility rights cannot segment but are interdependent and intertwined” (Awortwi, Okwany 2010, p: 139). In this regard, (Das, Kuyini et al. 2013) stresses that the provision of poor education in terms of quality generates graduates with poor skills which will affect their future professional life, and that according to Das implies discrimination. (Das, Kuyini et al. 2013) position towards the role of state to realize the rights to education agrees with Thampson, Das sees also that the responsibility of governments is not limited to just provisioning of accessible basic education for children, but it includes that governments should make sure also it is reachable for the marginalized children.

As (Farrell 1999) argues, that the role of the state in realizing the right to education goes beyond making education accessible to making sure also that they acquire skills and benefit from the educational process. The state should ensure all children enjoy that as their right without any consideration to their social, economic or cultural background (Farrell 1999, p: 155).

However the right to education is a challenge for many developing countries who are struggling to meet their obligations through the initiative of UPR or EFA. These efforts are challenged by several constrains. (Awortwi, Okwany 2010) mentions that some obstacles might be shaped by the family such as financial and physical access, in addition to the content and quality of education that is provided. While the quality of school and processes within, this according to (Awortwi, Okwany 2010) is considered as determining the rights within education (Awortwi, Okwany 2010).

### Capability approach

This approach found by Sen (1999), who sees development should be consider as the expansion of the human capabilities, but not the maximization of the utility or proxy, income. This approach has rejected money income as a measure of human well-being, while it focuses on indicators of the freedom that allow human to live a valued life. Therefore, social exclusion is a process which impediments some people to access and exercise their right to education regardless the reason, so according to this approach school dropout particularly at basic level of education consider as failure to satisfy a very crucially and important key (education) which enable individuals to enjoy their rights.

According to Sen, Capability analysis allows us to measure the relations between the means and the actual opportunities. The idea of capability according to Sen is “the opportunity to achieve valuable combinations of human functionings- what a person is able to do or be” For instance, the difference in the quality of education provisioning as in figure () and (), it necessarily brings different results, in other words, the students who learn in the low quality schools (figure), they will not expect to achieve the same education attainment which could be achieve by their peers who studying in better quality school (Figure), here process and opportunities connect to the content of human rights, Sen ().

# Exclusionary basic schooling system

In this part of the paper, the author analyzes the NPEA which represents the main education policy of Sudan, in relation to the phenomenon of school dropouts. The author sees that the reports of the Sudan ministry of education show a clear gap between what has been pronounced and is still being pronounced in many occasions (by the government) and what is the reality on the ground. Based on the above data in chapter two, it is clear that significant differences and disparities in several domains regarding basic education are taking place. For instance there are huge disparities in enrolment for boys and girls between the different regions in the country, while there are gender disparities within the regional states, see (table no. 1 & figure no. 2). There are also huge differences in the rates of school dropout between the regional states (table no. 2). However the data indicates also that, the areas where the percentages of poverty are higher are associated with higher gender disparities and the lowest rates of literacy compared to other areas. This brings about the influences of poverty as a factor that weakens the effective participation of children from poor communities on one hand, while on the other it highlights the policy gap that makes fair opportunity to basic education inaccessible to all children, see (Table No. 1, figure No. 1& 2)

### Aspects of discrimination and marginalization

The federal ministry of education attributes the state failure to provide universal basic education to all children in the country to four reasons, two of them relate to the civil war in the southern region, while the others relate to limitation of financial resources and decrease of the foreign aid. So these reasons according to (Ministry of Education 2003) justifying the disparities of education service provisioning across the regions.

The author agrees partially with this claim. There is no doubt that the conflict that took place prior to the independence of South Sudan caused massive destruction for education institutions. However the rest of this claim is not built on a strong argument, in reality. It does not justify the state’s failure to provide universal education to all children in the country, but in reality the state failed to provide fair and equal opportunity for the children to access their right to education, even within the limited resources that available (Adam, Musa et al. 2003), (Mudathir 2009), (Lubna 2011), (Hamid 2010). The conflict in Sudan started in 1955, a few months before independence. The Southern Sudanese complained against inequality and marginalization not only by the English colonial system but also because of the Northern Sudanese who manipulated the political and economic domains (Suliman 2000, p: 165). One aspect of this manipulation was the nationalization of employment known as ‘Sudanization of employment’ a process in which the South Sudan got four positions out of 800. Then the conflict ran from August 1955 until 2005 with the exception of 10 years of peace during 1972 to 1983. Later the conflict expanded to parts of South Kordofan and Blue Nile (Suliman 2000, p: 166). Regarding the Darfur conflict which commences seriously in 2003 up to now, this was the last option left for the region after raising their voice for more than four decades which started by Darfur native leaders in 1955 (Ibrahim Musa Madibo the leader of Rezaigate tribe in Darfur and others). Then the complaints developed in the first Darfuri movement call Suni Front which represented all Darfurians and then diversified into the Darfur Arising Front and others. In addition, demands were raised by Darfur civil society organizations. All these movements are peaceful and nonviolent except one movement led by Dawood Yahia Boulad which did not live more than few months in 1993 (Suliman 2000). So since the national independence in 1956 until the end of year 2002 there was no conflict in Darfur apart from a number of limited struggles between some tribes from time to time. Yet there was a distinct lack of state concern towards security as well as failure to provide public services such as water, health, education and infrastructure (See table no. 6). The reason for the conflict in Darfur is similar if not typical to the war with South Sudan: it is about marginalization and the imbalance of wealth and power distribution. I would argue that the Darfur revolt against the central government of Sudan expresses the opinion of the people that the embedded mismanagement which has led to inequitable and injustice distribution of resources has reached an extent where it is intolerable.

It is evident that this process has already created social marginalization - when individuals and groups of people are deprived to have equal and adequate opportunities to better their lives where education is the cornerstone to realization of betterment. Social marginalization according to (S A Hamed 2009) has both subjective and objective dimensions and mechanisms to facilitate and maintain the process which is usually legitimized ideologically as something that happens against non-Muslims minorities in Sudan, culturally or politically. Hamed stresses that, social marginalization is promoted and sustained through state policies and laws whose underlying ideology justified the process under themes of patriotism, economic growth, bureaucracy, efficiency, science and religion. Social marginalization could be much clearer in the context of Sudan through its indicators, which according to Hamed are; representation of people in decision making process, recognition of rights and responsibilities, and equal distribution and redistribution of resources and services. Therefore marginalization could be one of the significant elements in the dynamics of social inequality.

#### Identification of Advantages and disadvantaged and disadvantaged regions with the county-Hamdi triangle

Hamdi Triangle is a famous term among Sudanese politics and media, the term found by Abdel Rahim Hamdi the ex-financial minister in his paper titled ‘the economic investment in Sudan’ presented in the general conference of the National Congress Party- NCP (the ruling regime) in 2005. The term refers to a geographical area starting from the Sudanese Egyptian borders in the north to Sinnar state in the South, and from Red Sea in the east to White Nile in the west (Al Bagir 2010). This region includes, according to Hamdi, the Sudanese who share many commonalities such as culture and religion. And this was confirmed latter in 2010 by Sudan president Omer Al Basheir in Qadarif stating that “ if South Sudan vote for separation, we will modify the Sudan constitution and then there will not be any domain for talking about ethnic or cultural diversity, and Islam and Shariea will be the main source of legislation” (Eelia 2010).

The imbalance of state provisioning of education services in terms of quality and quantity has not been isolated from the inequality of the distribution of wealth and power across the country, which deprived the majority of the citizens in the country from their basic rights such as food, water, health and education. this deprivation is much harder in certain regions mainly the West and East regions and South Sudan indeed before independence. Hamid Al Bushier (2010) prescribes the formulation and structure of the national development budget particularly during the last seventeen years of the existing ruling regime (Al Ingaz rgime) in reflecting a sort of bias based on geographical areas. This confirmed, according to Hamid by Sideeg Umbada, that the state spending on development in Darfur during the above mentioned period has not exceeded 2% out of what has been spent in the country although it constitutes 30% of the population of Sudan (Hamid 2010).

**Decentralization**

Al Ingaz regime in Sudan adopted the decentralization ruling system in year 1994, aiming through this to empower local governments and communities to participate more effectively by sharing the responsibilities and duties of the rule. However the experience of decentralization has been different in different countries, with different impacts as well.

(King, Ozler 2000) addresses some advantages of the decentralization in education field for instance they see that decentralization enables the local communities with relationships with schools such as students, parents, teachers make a better contribution to improving schools, because they are closer to school than the authorities. According to (Jarrín 2008, p: 79) decentralization could give local communities more influence on the control of their schools and increase accountability. In addition, decentralization is assumed to encourage competition at the local level which could has positive impact on school improvement (p: 79).

Whilst Abu Baker Ali, (Sudanese Journalist and students’ father), sees decentralization is one of the main reasons that weakened education in Sudan, mainly in certain regions such states of Darfur, Kordofan and Red Sea. Indicating that these states are poor states, they are not able to cover basic expenses. Ali explained that Sudan adopted the decentralization policy of education, through which the federal government withdraws funding basic education and remains only with the responsibilities of planning, monitoring and advising, whilst the heavy burden of the job (and the funding) has been transferred to the localities, which have very limited resources. Then the localities transfer the burden again to the community, to students’ fathers, by asking them to pay several fees. According to the head of education technical unite, there are 4 types of fee; tuition fees which were abolished by the state, school maintenance fees, this is used for maintaining schools since each year,. There is also the teacher support fee used to pay volunteer teachers because most of the schools in both urban and rural areas lack staff, so the school administration normally asks students’ parents to contribute with some money to pay those volunteers. In some places the volunteers get only a meal at school and that is all because the money paid by students’ parents is so little, this is beside the water fee which is paid on a weekly basis by students in most schools, more particularly in rural areas. (Interview with head of education technical unite of South Darfur State cited in (Adam 2013)).

#### State policy and unbalanced provision of education and public services

#### (UNICEF 2010), identifies that one component of the problem that challenges the right to education is the established inequalities, beside other factors such as poverty, location and school distance and conflict which are linked to the issue; “At the root of such challenges lie the deeply entrenched structural inequalities and disparities that out-of-school children face”. The issue of structural inequalities particularly in developing countries has been mentioned also in the human development report of year 2003, which states that there are three main matters challenging developing countries to achieve real progress in expanding primary education. Those are: firstly, the limited resources that can be spend on education compared to the other sectors. Secondly, rich people usually are the ones who benefit more for the few resources that the state spends on education, which reflects inequality. Lastly, most of the budget goes to teachers’ salaries while little amounts remain for the facilities and learning materials (UNDP 2003).

#### Thus numerous of observers such as Kabaj in (Lubna 2011) and Mudathir (2009), see the weak public spending on education, which does not exceed 6.7% in 2003- 2004 (this for all education pre-schooling, basic, secondary and high education) is one of the majors reasons behind the deterioration of education in the country, as Mudathir said; “poor communities are the ones who pay the price” (p: 15). However in the distribution of this tiny budget of education across the country, we notice that there is an imbalance which actually dominates the process of the resource distribution in the country (table no. 5, 6). This claim is confirmed by Abdel Hamid Kasha, the Wali (Governor) of South Darfur state (in 2010) by claiming that “the deterioration of education in Darfur is a direct consequence of the underfunded education budget for south Darfur state” (Ahmed 2011). The education budget in each state has a federal and a local component. The federal component usually delays, paid partially and most of the time never paid, and the local component was minor.

Table 4: Public spending on education for the years 2000 to 2004

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Spending/student** | **Eastern Region** | | **Western Region** | | **Southern Region** | |
| No. of student | Spending on education | No. of students | Spending on education | No. of students | Spending on education |
| 2000-2001 | $56.93 | 3314875 | 188716 | 1197350 | 68165 | 160446 | 9134 |
| 2001-2002 | $66.79 | 3129820 | 209041 | 1201859 | 80272 | 160212 | 10701 |
| 2001-2003 | $76.79 | 3324464 | 255286 | 1338220 | 102762 | 207106 | 15904 |
| 2003-2004 | $131.74 | 3452553 | 454839 | 1488033 | 196033 | 247500 | 32606 |

Source:

Table 5: The disparities of public spending on education across the country regions

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Year** | **Percentage of public spending on education** | | |
| ***Eastern*** | ***Western*** | ***Southern*** |
| 2000- 2001 | 70.9 | 25.6 | 3.5 |
| 2001- 2002 | 69.7 | 26.6 | 3.5 |
| 2002- 2003 | 68.3 | 27.5 | 4.2 |
| 2003- 2004 | 66.5 | 28.7 | 4.8 |

***Not only education:***

Based on the Sudan census in 2003, the ministry of finance and national economy has conducted a study to draw the timeframe for the country regions to escape poverty in the light of the MDGs. The study divided the country into three regions; Eastern region includes Northern, River Nile, Khartoum, Gazeria, Kassala, Qadarif, Red Sea states), Western region includes (North, South and West Darfur and Kordofan states) and Southern region include (ten states of South Sudan). The study shows that the Eastern region will escape poverty the year 2009, and the Western region in 2029 and the Southern region in 2058. The study notes that the health spending per capita in the Eastern region during the years 2000, 2004 and 2005 reached US$ 1.2, US$ 2.75 and US$ 4.4 respectively. While in the same periods the health spending per capita in the Western region is US$ 0.023, US$ 0.5 and US$ 0.3 and it is US$ 0.3, US$ 0.2 and US$ 0.1 in the Southern region (Mudathir 2009). This disparity between regions applies to all other domains that relate to the public provisioning of services and basic goods which reflects the inequitable distribution of the resources across the country as appears in (table no, 6).

However the marginalization policy of the Sudan central elite towards the remote regions as mentioned above is not new. A group of researchers at the University of Khartoum called the Darfur Peace Group, their book titled ‘Development is the Peace Key in Darfur’ they point that, the issue of imbalanced of development between the state’s regions has been subjected to many researches by both Sudanese and non-Sudanese researchers. For instance in the year 1971 a mission from ILO has been invited by the government of Sudan to assist in analysing the economic situation in the country, in order to submit suggestions regarding three issues: Gross, Labour and Fair distribution of the wealth (Adam, Musa et al. 2003). The Summary suggestions of the ILO mission was that; the state economy in general agricultural compresses from two sectors in the centre of Sudan (Eastern region) based on irrigated and rain-fed machinery agriculture, and the traditional sector in Western and Southern regions which depends on rain-fed agriculture and livestock. The suggestions indicate that the economic development has been concentrated for a long time on the modern sector, but not only development schemes but the public services as well (health, education, etc.), this policy according the ILO has created developmental grievance among the people in the traditional sector. However, the production inputs in the traditional sector are lower in cost than in the modern one whilst the investment returns in the two sectors are almost the same (Adam, Musa et al. 2003, pp: 7-9).

Table 6: Household and housing indication

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicators** | **Sudan** | **Northern** | **River Nile** | **Red Sea** | **Kassala** | **Qadarif** | **Khartoum** | **Gazira** | **White Nile** | **Sinnar** | **Blue Nile** | **North Kordofan** | **South Kordofan** | **North Darfur** | **West Darfur** | **South Darfur** |
|
| Proportion of Population With Access to Improved Water Source | 55.0 | 87.0 | 62.0 | 21.0 | 34.0 | 43.0 | 82.0 | 81.0 | 49.0 | 75.0 | 43.0 | 44.0 | 60.0 | 38.0 | 38.0 | 37.0 |
| Proportion of Households With No Toilet Facilities | 45.7 | 15.8 | 27.6 | 67.4 | 62.3 | 59.4 | 9.4 | 45.9 | 53.1 | 51.5 | 46.8 | 51.8 | 60.0 | 49.6 | 59.4 | 58.3 |
| Proportion of Households using Firewood | 56.1 | 50.2 | 37.4 | 51.1 | 66.4 | 59.1 | 6.0 | 27.3 | 35.3 | 49.2 | 80.1 | 79.7 | 82.7 | 92.1 | 94.8 | 89.6 |
| Proportion of Households with No Lighting | 6.6 | 4.4 | 6.9 | 20.1 | 17.5 | 3.8 | 6.3 | 1.9 | 4.3 | 2.5 | 5.0 | 5.0 | 3.4 | 5.3 | 9.7 | 6.6 |
| Households own TV per 100 households | 27.0 | 49.0 | 39.0 | 19.0 | 16.0 | 20.0 | 66.0 | 43.0 | 28.0 | 27.0 | 16.0 | 11.0 | 12.0 | 8.0 | 5.0 | 7.0 |
| Households own mobile phones per 100 households | 38.0 | 70.0 | 59.0 | 31.0 | 28.0 | 33.0 | 75.0 | 51.0 | 45.0 | 42.0 | 27.0 | 24.0 | 25.0 | 17.0 | 9.0 | 14.0 |

Source: Sudan Central Bureau of Statistics, Sudan Census 2008 updated 2011

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Table 7:Statistics of school dropout | |  |  |
| **State** | **Dropouts of 2001\_2002** | **Dropouts of 2003\_2004** | **Dropouts of 2005\_2006** |
| Sudan |  |  | 1.4 |
| Northren | 2.4 | 2.4 | 0.8 |
| River Nile | 1.3 | 1.6 | 0.4 |
| Khartoum | 1.3 | 1.2 | 1.2 |
| Gazira | 0.6 | 0.6 | 0.2 |
| Sinar | 2.7 | 2.7 | 4.3 |
| Blue Nile | 18.8 | 18.8 | 0 |
| White Nile | 3.6 | 3.6 | 1.4 |
| Gadarif | 7.3 | 6.4 | 1.5 |
| Kassala | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Red Sea | 11.5 | 11.5 | 0 |
| North Kordufan | 2.7 | 2.7 | 1.9 |
| South Kordufan | 3.7 | 3.7 | 1.1 |
| West Kordufan | 0.5 | 0.5 | Not reported |
| North Darfur | 3.8 | 3.8 | 0 |
| South Darfur | 1.6 | 1.6 | 0 |
| West Darfur | 12.9 | 14.2 | 0 |

Source: Educational Statists Reports of the Years 2001-2002, 2003- 2004 and 2005- 2006. Sudan Federal Ministry of Education.

Discussion

# Multiple factors that influence school dropout

This chapter discusses the phenomenon of school dropouts in the context of Sudan as a result of a policy gap that fails to provide equal opportunities to school children. The chapter illustrates through the aforementioned approach how the failure of state and duty bearers in Sudan has led to the violation of children’s right to education as it isolates millions of children from their right to education. As mentioned in the introduction and in other parts of this paper, the reasons which push students to drop out of school are different from one country to another, and they are different even within a country, as that appears in the context of Sudan, where various factors are involved.

### An inadequate provision and low quality of education

Although Sudan has made significant achievements regarding education since independence until now as mentioned in chapter. 1, and that education has been set throughout all the different, democratic or dictatorship regimes as one of the high priorities. But the reality on the ground strongly contradicts what is on paper. Through consecutive governments until now there continues to be a failure to ensure a strong concern for education. According to Alnour, the significant changes in the political domains that took place in Sudan during the years 1956, 1969, 1973, 1978, 1979, 1981, 1983, and 1984 (Hamad, Abboud 2012, P: 4) have aimed, every time, to expand the role of the education minister on account of administrative and senior officers at both national and regional state levels, by putting much power and responsibilities to the minister. This, according to Alnour, appears the tendency of Sudanese politicians from different backgrounds, to control the ministry of education through which they impose and serve their agendas (Hamad, Abboud 2012). Alnour describes the politicians with scrimping: they are very eager to control the ministry of education but they do not fund education. Alnour indicates that spending on education in 1975/1976 was 60/6.35, and now (2012) is 70/2.75 as examples that show education has never been a priority to the governments. The claims of Alnour has been supported by Wala who reported in her article about the weekly forum of consumer protection in Khartoum that, the education experts have requested the government to revise its priorities and pay more practical concern to education, they see it is not justified from the government side to allocate only 0.8 % from the GDP to education, they suggested 20% instead (Wala 2013). The lack of good governance or willingness, which appears in the lack of plan designing or implementation processes has impacted negatively on education standards for the whole country, but there are several groups which have been effected more. Children from rural areas, poor families and girls more particularly are the most effected by the deterioration that hit the education system, as the public relations officer of the ministry of education has revealed that the state is not able to provide education services to 30% of students at basic school (Wala 2013). This raises a serious questions about the future of those students for the short run which is about their sustainability to continue basic schooling within those schools which lack very essential and simple facilities, or for the long run which is about how students can acquire good skills that help them to face the challenges of life and access the labour market through this poor schooling. Both children and their parents do not expect much from these poor schools (See figures 1.3 and 1.5) because they lacks even the minimum essential requirements such as text books, classrooms, seats, stationary and teachers, which are all essential conditions for the educational process (M.Salih 2013). Therefore 30% of the students in basic education system are not receiving educational services as their colleagues in certain places do, and that means a direct violation to the UNSECO ADAEE and the UNCRC in article 2 that stressed the equity, ‘all children have those rights included in the convention with no matter to who they are, where they live or what their parents do, … etc.’. Those students have discriminated against with intention or without and excluded automatically from a significant element (education) that helps them a lot to better their lives. Which lastly deepening the inequalities that place around the half of population under the poverty line while only 10% of the population possess 80% of the national wealth (Hassan 2013).

### Socio-economic factors

The abolishment of school tuition fees as part of the NPEFA that has been declared by the Sudanese government in 2000, has resulted in the expansion of basic education and has offered a huge opportunity for children to access basic education, especially for people in rural areas as quoted from the ministry of education report; “…New educational system is designed to lengthen the productive life of the citizen and to reduce the cost of education, that is why a huge boom has achieved in the increased  rates of educational institutions and the numbers of those who had opportunities to be enrolled, over the past two decades” (National report:2008). But it seems the policy planners did not give much consideration to elements of quality and sustainability, which has increased the vulnerability of certain groups based on their ethnicity, religious, culture, socio-economic situation and the geographical areas where(Lubna 2011). However the abolishing of school fees is controversial.

Abu Baker says “I was not surprised for those whom I have seen pull their children from schools for being unable to pay different fees. All those fees are in addition to buying text books, notebooks, pens and uniforms from the market, and after these all then you need to provide food and transportation for your kids. I’m really confused when I hear somebody saying education is free”. He concluded by saying: “… the educational system is actually serving those who can afford it, and there is no way for the poor children to get access to it.” (Adam 2013: 6)). The convention prompts the government in article (4) to take its responsibility to make sure those rights including education are exercised and protected and help children’s families to create the environment where they can grow and reach their potential, the article (26) and (27) has emphasised the state’s responsibility to provide enough help to the children of the poor to exercise their rights in terms of food, clothing, education and so forth.

Musa Awad Alkrim is a student of grade four in Durbb Al Nar basic school in While Nile State. Awad has been sent back home many times because he did not pay school weekly fee (0.5 SSD) which his family do not afford to pay, one day morning Awad back home for school for the same reason, his mother asked him to go back to school, Awad refused to go to school and said to him mother: “ I will put an end to this” then he want to small room built from local materials (hut), he brought rope and tided one of its part up and the other around his neck and jumped from the table that he stood on it, After a while, his mother walked to him in the room, and shocked when saw him has passed away (Abbas 2012).

The story above has been told by a teacher (A.N)works Al Diwaim locality which the school belong to, in a workshop about school fees, conducted by Institute of Child Rights (ICR) and Al Aiam Newspaper. The story shows the school fees which include more than one fee and takes many names relate to purpose of school and that will come in more details later. But also it gives a glimpse of the pain and problems that not only parents form poor communities are facing but the suffering of children themselves as a study on school dropout in Ireland by (Ref) shows. In A country where 90% of population according to many observers who suspicious about the state statistics such as Mahjoob M. Salih in (Abbas 2012)and the economist Hassan Satti who points that only 10% of the population possessing 80% of the wealth of the country. Although the rate of these kind of incidents is not high or not reported, but the author could argue that, many students who dropout by their own decisions despite their parents do all that possible to keep them in school, those students are forced to dropout by a painful pressure they feel when they see and observe how their parents suffer to afford them the schooling requirements. The author has moved through this as a personal experience as well as have many of the author’s friends and relatives.

Mudathir Abu Algasim (2009), attributes the school dropout phenomenon at basic education level to the shortage of schools in terms of quantity and quality, particularly in rural areas. Mudathir considers that, the high cost of education and it’s little returns are also reasons behind the reluctance of students’ parents towards the obligatory laws of education, as he sees the inefficient management system within schools, and inability to provide an attractive environment as also contributing in raising the number of school leavers. Therefore according to Mudathir the high rates of school dropout in developing countries explains the association between poverty and school dropouts as cause on one hand and outcome on the other.

But it is important to indicate that, regarding the economic situation of the country which witnessed a significant decline in the 1990s as a result of the massive economic sanctions, and that has caused real deterioration to the livelihood of the citizens particularly the poor and those at the lower steps of the middle class ladder. This hardship situation has been worsen with the aggressive privatization that the government has adopted as part of economics reforms during the same period. However since 2000 oil production has boosted the economy, as witnessed by the WB, but it remains as a figure, with very limited impact on the livelihood of the normal people who joke “ we have been better off before the oil ” meaning that the oil revenue has not been invested or spent on public services or invested on the agriculture or establishing schemes that could lift people from poverty. Most of the money has been spent on civil wars under the theme of security, allocated to government senior staff and constitutional members beside spending on different political agendas related to one political party that rules the country. Therefore in this circumstance, where poverty plays a main role in increasing the rates of school dropout in both basic and secondary education together, the gap between formal and informal education in widening as well, then the children who do not enrolled or those who dropped out are mainly from poor households. The outcome of this process weakens social solidarity and cohesion and deepens social exclusion and inequality, and constructs social class and stratification for the long run, as it has been seen in the context of Sudan.

### Cost opportunity

Losing income contribution that adds by children considers one of the factors that has effect on school enrolment and dropping out of it. Opportunity costs, according to Aikman and Elaine, 2005 “refer to labour time lost to the parent when the child goes to school”. In most of developing countries, girls are usually doing some kinds of work at the house which generally labelled as girls/women tasks, this include cooking, look after small kids, caring for elderlies, bring water, clean the houses, house nurse, and in addition to wash men’s cloths, farm and sell their labour to provide income to the family. Girls contribution to family income is much high than the boys. This contribution considers one of the main factor influence parents’ decisions regarding to send to school Aikman and Elaine, 2005.

Kadzamira (2003) argues that the main factor that influences the low level of education is poverty. She sees poverty as a cause and result of weak education systems in many developing countries that lack enough resources to invest on good quality education. She also pointed out that, education is an investment for the long term. It might not be possible for many families to make the sacrifice for, waiting its impact while receiving no income contribution from their children, but they still endure several burdens to send their children to school.(Kadzamira, Rose 2003: 501,502), In order to achieve the UPE goal many developing countries particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa have declared abolishing school fees. In countries like Uganda, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania and Sudan, this step has had positive impacts in increasing the numbers of school enrollment especially children from poor families (ibid).

In the context of Sudan which is also a Sub-Saharan African country so it shares a lot of similarities with the countries mentioned by Kadzmaire and Rose. The time that poor households should wait for education returns from their children seems too long for them. The main priority are food and health for instance, therefore many households pull their children out of school and send them to market, to work in farms, or look after cattle instead of continuing their schooling. The opportunity cost of education has been mentioned above by Mudathir and confirmed also through the speech of the EU representative in Sudan, he stated in launching the student sustainability program in the Eastern States of Sudan (funded by EU) that; “school dropout has reached to 46% for many reasons most of them are relate to economic such as child labour …”, (Amany 2013)

### Other fees

A study carried out by the USAID (2007) shows there are various elements that have an influence on whether children continue attending schools or leave them and dropout. The study found that monetary cost stands as an essential barrier for many students to attend the school. For instance in Kenya the average of absentee students from school in relation to a fee issue is 31% and 12% of student absence is accounted for the same reason of school-fees in Nigeria (Equip2 2007: 5). School cost includes various costs like fees, uniforms, transportation, food, and learning materials. Some students’ parents in Zambia for instance reported that they feel too ashamed to explain to school administrators that they are unable to pay the school fees so they withdraw their children, (Oxfam-Zambia, cited in (Equip2 2007).

In a recorded interview with the author, the head of education technical unite at the Ministry of Education of South Darfur state, has admitted that, there are 4 types of fee; tuition fees which were abolished by the state but still most schools ask for it especially in poor regions because localities have no enough resources to meet the education expenditure, school maintenance fees, this fee is used for school maintanence every year because there are too many schools in rural areas are made of local materials, so every year they must be maintained while other schools in towns and in cities also need money to maintain buildings and repair the furniture too. There is also the teacher support fee which is used to pay volunteer teachers because most of the schools in both urban and rural areas have a shortage of staff, so the school administration normally asks students’ parents to contribute with some money to pay those volunteers. In some places the volunteers get only a meal at school and that is all because the money paid by students’ parents is so little, this is beside the water fee, which is paid on a weekly basis by students in most schools, more particularly in regions and rural areas where there is no water supply in schools? (*Interview with head of education technical unite of South Darfur State cited in (Adam 2013)*).

While an ex-minister of housing and planning of Darfur Region stated in interview by Radio Dabanga in 2009 said that, during several years only 15% of the students complete basic education in West Darfur state, he alerted that has serious impact for the future life of those who deprived to complete their basic education.

Figure 3: Rate of poverty across the regional state.

Source: Sudan Central Bureau, Sudan Census 2008 update 2011

According to Abu Baker Ali, (Sudanese Journalist and students’ father), basic education in Sudan is “not free”. He explained that since the government of Sudan has implemented the decentralization policy of education, through which the federal government withdraws funding basic education and remains only with the responsibilities of planning, monitoring and advising. Whereas the heavy burden of the job (the funding) has been transferred to the localities, which many of them are suffering from the scarcity of resources. Then the localities transfer the burden towards the communities to establish schools and contribute to the provision of school assets and learning materials and students’ fathers have been asked to pay several types of fees.

### Cultural and religious factors

In their study which analyses the Sudan basic education curriculum, (Hamad, Abboud 2012), describes the change that has taken place since the early 1990s, as the most significant one. He sees the ruling regime in Sudan (Al Ingaz) which has imposed the political ideology of one party (Islamic Front Party) as leading to an unprecedented further deterioration in education (Hamad, Abboud 2012). As a critique of the educational policy particularly at the basic level, Breidlid (2006) points that, the education system in Sudan is influenced by Islamic ideology and biased as well on the Arab culture so that it pushes many children from other religious and ethnicity groups to drop out of the schools. He also said: “The very fact that Christian education is permitted outside the ordinary school hours proves that the rhetoric is not without some substance. Christian education has in principle been recognized as an alternative subject to Islamic education, where separate examination papers in Christianity are prepared. In 1994, the Ministry of Education rejected a proposed syllabus for Christian education in public schools, but subsequently a modified version was accepted in 2002. Due to different circumstances, the completion of the new syllabus was postponed, and in early 2003 the syllabus was still not in place” (Breidlid 2006: 265). He added that Christian subjects are not taught regularly but neglected and this has led Christian students to look for private bodies like churches and NGOs to help in preparing for their examinations. That is for the lucky students who live in the urban areas while those who are in rural areas and war victims mostly lose the opportunity. Further, he indicated that the Christian education that is facilitated by church members usually encounters serious practical and ideological obstacles. To support his claim he used a quote of a Muslim teacher at basic school who said: “education is not related to real life … there is a negative relationship between the school and society … most people cannot benefit from it” (Breidlid 2006: 258). Breidlid highlights the contradiction of the national policy with UNCRC in article 29 that states: “States Parities agree that the education of the child shall be directed to the development of respect for the child’s parents, his/she own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he/she may originate, and for civilizations different form his /her own (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989)”. Alnour see the way that education policies design and implement will not encourage the full participation of non-Muslims who many were withdrew their kids from state school. Education in the modern state should be for all children without any discrimination as in the UNESCO AADCE, but the situation in Sudan is much controversial according to Alnour. Hamad, Abboud (2012) see the education in Sudan especially at the basic level designed to generate people who think within the ideology boundaries that rooted in their minds through the curriculum.

Table 8: The multiple factors that influence the phenomenon of school dropout.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Factors** | **Indicators** | **Practicies** | **Consequencies** |
| **Socio-economic** | Level of income and education experience of the household | • Child labour  • Early marriage | Dropout of school |
| **Cultural** | Religious, traditions and believes | • Religious educa-tion  • Dominance of one religion.  • Early marriage  • Pregnancy  • Gender discrimi-nation | Dropout and withdraw from school |
| **Political** | * Lack of good governance, corruption, political influence, instability, and conflict. * Decentralization | * Poor education services, lack of facilities. * Child solider | Leaving school |
| **School** | * Language * Behaviors * Lack/weak school system | * Violence * Pregnancy * Mass | Dropout of school |
| **Others** | • Drought and disasters  • Pandemic dis-eases (HIV/AIDS) | * Child labour * Sickness and disabilities | Dropping out of school |

*Source: Prepared by the author*

Figure 4: Students who attained the first 100 grades in secondary school examinations in year 2008.

*Source: Report of Year 2008 Result- Committee of Sudanese Examinations- Sudan Federal Ministry of Education*

Figure 5: Students who attained the first 100 grades in secondary school examinations in year 2010

*Source: Report of Year 2008 Result- Committee of Sudanese Examinations- Sudan Federal Ministry of Education*

### Poverty as cause and result

### School as factor

Social environment within the schools through the relationships between students , students and teachers, and among teachers is also closely connected to the phenomenon of school dropout. Some writers point that, the phenomenon of sexual harassment by teachers against their students has a negative impact for students’ future. Those victims of the harassment of sexual abuse at school are vulnerable to dropout either because their parents pull them out from school that they do not trust, or by their selves as a result of the pressure that they face internally and external by colleagues. This especially in the contexts where sex and homosexuality is a matter only for adults like in Sudan for instance, so the victims are stigmatized by their peers and community some times.

In its report about the spread of violence in schools titled by ‘Learning without fear’ Plan International Organization reveals that, the high level of violence in the school irritates the concern and constrains the government efforts to provide quality education for students. The reports finds that many students of male and female have been dropping out of schools due to sexual abuse and physical damage (PIO 2008). According to the report, a research conducted in this regards shows that 8% of students between 16-17 in Uganda have practiced sex with their teachers, while in South Africa the research points that one-third of rape crimes are committed by school employees, and in a survey conducted in Benin covered 10 villages found that 34% of the children have subjected sexual violence in their schools. The report describes that boy student are suffering higher from the harsh punishment by their teachers while harassment and sexual abuse have been used mostly against the girls. The report adds that, girls are subjected to aggression not only from their teachers but also from their male peers(PIO 2008).

Teachers have been considered as a fundamental player in making the difference with the schools. (Reezigt, Creemers 2005), points out that teachers can make change through their classrooms and their daily practices and interactions with students. In such contexts like rural areas in Sudan where there is no efficient school system that sustains a positive school traditions and control over the relationships between students to each other and to their teachers, some students are subjected to negative treatment and practices by the teachers and school workers.

In Sudan a lot of talk is going around in the social media and general talk in streets and at the family level a about the problem of harassment and sexual abuse. However these issues in Sudan are considered one of the hot issues which is not easy for the media to broadcast or publish. However there are many cases of rape and harassment have been reported after the minister of education in Khartoum state formed a committee to revise the files of more than 20000 teachers to ensure their behaviour, psychological, CVs and academic capabilities, so as to eliminate the phenomenon of rape (Al Tahir 2013). For instance, on the 10th of January 2013 the minister of education of Khartoum stated in a press conference denial rape case against (26) children in Bahri basic school in Khartoum he said; “ the case is not rape but it is sexual harassments” (Al Sudani 2013), There are several reports indicating that there are too many cases of problems of harassment, sexual abuse and violence taking place in schools which go unreported and, which push some children to abandon school and in other cases the households have withdrawn their children from certain schools for the sake of their reputations.

Another problem within school also is the harsh punishment that is very common in schools in small towns and rural areas, and it is one of the main reasons that push some students to leave school. Sometimes students are beaten for nonsense reasons such as beating for warming- up because they are a bit sleepy after the lunch, or other times beaten because they make a lot of noise when there is no teacher in the class, or when they have the school at the end of the day, this beside many other reasons most of them determined by the teacher and his/her mood at that particular day, the punishment is extremely harsh, tough and cruel, “ I remember many classmates have left school and escape from their family to the big city because of punishment” (Author memories).

Sahra Ibrahim is a journalist who investigated two cases of punishment and narrated the stories in Al Entibaha Sudanese Newspaper published on Sunday 10 Oct 2011: “ Fatima Musa a girl of ten years old studying at basic school in Mau in Khartoum state, Fatima has been beaten by her teacher because she did not bring school fee five Sudanese Pounds (US$ 1), during the beating she stood on a glass, her foot injured, she suffered for one year with her injury and nobody has help her poor family for proper medical treatment she lost her food and becomes handicap”. Sahra added that Mohamed Faiz Ibrahim a boy of same age of Fatima has passed away as a result of beating in his head (Sahra 2011).

The report points that the children do not report the violence and sexual abuse that they are suffering from at schools, because of the social customs and traditions and feeling shame and dishonour which are all considered as barriers for some teachers as well to report about their colleagues, however John Shallonair from PIO said to IRIN that, children do not know who to trust, so it must find a way to enable them to express what they feel (PIO 2008).

### Demand and supply issues

Regarding the demands of education it differs from area to area across the country. For instance quantity of schools are lower than the number of children of school age in regions which suffer lack of infrastructure such as good roads, transportations and communication means. However poor households in their struggle with life’s difficulties tend to offer education for the minimum number from their children,is this due to education cost in one hand and the needs of child contribution for household income (Kadzamira, Rose 2003). Therefore the issue of discrimination within the household is considered as an essential player to determine who goes to school and who doesn’t. The household makes preferences mainly based on gender, to the favour of boys in most cases. For instance in many areas in the country such as Darfur states, Red Sea, Kassala and Qadarif households prefer to send the boys to school while keeping girls for unpain work in the household, they cook, wash, clean, bring water, collect fire woods, take care for kids, etc. This is almost similar to the situation of many African countries which has been analysed by the global initiative of OOSC briefing paper about ESARO. The paper identifies that the socio-cultural practices and socio- economic circumstances are the main categories of the demand barriers (UNICEF, UIS 2011). The paper points to poverty as the main barrier for accessing education while schooling is not affordable to many poor families because of hidden and opportunity costs. At school level, gender violence and corporal punishment have been highlighted are reasons for diminishing demand for school especially for female.

On the supply side, the barriers include; the quality of class rooms, learning material and water and sanitation facilities. Also distance and unsafe schools and shortage of qualified teachers with weak education support, while female teachers face real challenges to work in some rural areas. In addition to that children from IDPs and refugees communities are faced with denial to sustained access to quality education (UNICEF, UIS 2011).

### Inaccurate and reliable information:

Through the research process, the data that has been collected carries a lot of contradiction which appears more clearly between what on the educational annual reports that issue by the federal ministry of education, and what the education ministers and senior officers release in the media. These contradictions make the research task more challenging, however the author has communicated with the head of educational technical unite who confirmed that there are some changes usually being make.

For instance the report of 2012 indicates school dropout rate in Kassala is 0.7. While the commissioner of Kassala Osman Mohamed Nour in workshop conducted by Partners of Orphans Development Organization on 27 of March 2013 that “there is a huge rate of students who drop out of school, in grade one the class at basic school start with 40 to 50 students and ends up with only four students in grade eight”, Nour who appreciated the efforts that have been provided by the organization, considers the economic situation is the main cause of the problem, he added, “I am a witness of this”.

Other news in Huriat e-Newspaper dated 17th of Aug 2013 said “senior office of the UN humanitarian aid in Sudan released a statement expressed through the UN concerns about 1.8 students who do not go to school , (Abdel Gafar 2013).

In Alray Alaam Newspaper which consider the government newspaper issues from Kartoum, in its edition (Amany 2013) reported the launched of a Program of Students Sustainability that donates by the European Commission in Sudan “ the ministry of education revealed that 46% of basic school students are out of school which shapes a serious dangerous that required join efforts. Mohamed Ahmed Humaida the general secretary of federal ministry of education has warned the education ministers at states levels not to put obstacles on the implementation of the program, while the EU representative in Sudan said that school dropout has reached to 46% for many reasons most of them are relate to economic such as child labour …”, the report points that Kassala, Qadafi, Red Sea and Blue Nile are the state where the highest rates of basic school dropouts (Alray Alaam).

Alsahafa Newspaper one of the most famous Sudanese newspapers issues from Kartoum in its edition (6243) reported that “the ministry of education revealed that 62,529 teachers have never got any kind training this out of 170,381 teachers. And concerning the rate of school dropout at basic education has rose especially among certain states such as the Northern which has the highest rate 12.1, Red Sea 11.9”. The report identifies the average of the dropout in the classes of grade one to five was 9% while in the last three grades six to eight was 15% and it pointed that the average rate of students who complete the basic school was 65% and it goes beyond 60% in the rural areas (Howadia 2013).

Other example also to explain further how the accessed information is contradicts. The educational report of 2009 -2010 shows there is no students dropout from school in West Darfur (it is zero) while the head of education council revealed in published interview on Radio Dabanga (RD) on 17th Sep 2010 that, the rate of dropout has reached 85% in the state, he alarms the dangerous of the consequences of school drop out for future of those children and the societies in the state as well.

However the author has built the core of the paper from the data and information of Sudan ministry of education to analyse the phenomenon of school dropout and to explain how the basic education system in the country functions is implying direct violation of children rights of education as it exclude millions of children to enjoy their social rights and through all these processes this system generates further and deepens the social inequality along the country.

# Conclusion

The phenomenon of school dropouts has spread throughout the countries of the world, but it is more apparent in some states more than the others, as it associates with various reasons influenced by different factors such as economic and social class, race, gender or demographical ones (UNESCO 2012). For instance, a UNESCO report for 2012 shows a rise in school dropouts at primary level in Sub-Saharan Africa while it declines in Latin America.

School dropout in Sudan does not look that different than in other developing countries, especially in Sub-Saharan African countries; although school dropout in Sudan has more specific dimensions, due to internal social, economic and political factors. Despite of state response to the problems of the low rates of school enrolment and high rates of school dropout at level of basic education, through abolishing of school fees, building more school and adding numbers of new teachers in order to realize universal basic education to all children in Sudan by 2015 through the NPEFA. The reports of ministry of education supported with the reality on the ground, show a significant progress has been achieved regarding remarkable increase in school enrolment during years 2000 to 2010, comparing to years 1990 to 1999 (figure). However, during the five previous years, school dropout or ‘education losses’ witnessed wider spread over formal and informal discussions in the country. The NPEFA has confronted with serious challenge to reduce the rates of students who leave school which becomes real threat to education as the general secretary of federal ministry of education has announced (Ref) and brings external actors to intervene such as EU and other organizations (Ref). Despite the contradiction in figures of school dropout rates, the rates that announce by all parts including Sudan ministry of education confirm that, the situation regarding the phenomenon is quite serious. And manifested that abolishing tuition fees, building schools and bring more teacher does not mean a solution that secures exercising the right to education, as (Kadzamira, Rose 2003) see the effects of abolishing school fees has contributed to increased enrolment, but very minor. While it indicates to that, there are other factors underpinning the phenomenon and complicate it in a way that makes school dropout an issue requires serious intervention, than be simplifying it.

The research has used a wide range of data on education and school dropout including reports from government of Sudan, international institutions and media in addition to quantitative and qualitative studies which carry useful information and empirical evidence assisted much in shaping the findings of the research. Believing on the effectiveness of mixed methodologies, various methodologies have been used and not limit to the studies that use any particular research methodology, which assisted the research to make broader and deep understanding to the problem and facilitated in answering the research questions.

The empirical evidence that reviewed through the research shows that, the inclusive educational policy that state has adopted in order to provide access to basic education to all children, the policy exclude a wide range people including children from poor and rural communities and deprived them to enjoy their right to education.

there is imbalance in the distribution of power and resources in the country in education resources. This has contributed strongly in sustaining the cycle of social exclusion against some people on the bases of their gender, capability or areas where they live (Hamid 2010).

In the context of Sudan, conflict appears as cause and result of school dropout, since the independence up to date, due to destruction and military occupation of education institutions in conflict areas, and militarization and mobilization (M.Salih 2013). A large number of youths and children of school age have become victimized, many of them killed, displaced, lost and isolated from their parents and pulled out of school and forced to participate in the conflict as armed children (child soldiers). However there are many cases documented of children volunteering by themselves for personal reasons (Mohamed 2009). The conflict effects in increasing the number of orphans, disabled, and HIV/AIDS carriers. Which do not get enough concern in public policy in general and less concern by education policy, a part of efforts provide by some NGOs who do not receive any assistance of facilities from the government (NGO employee).

The research based on reports and studies that reviewed as mentioned above, indicates that poverty is plays as one of the main factors that influence school dropout at basic education level. the implications of the economic reforms that The country has adopted in 1980s and implemented them fully during 1990s. The reforms resulted in putting more burdens on the communities through ‘community participation’ in which community should contribute in different forms (build schools, pay teachers’ salaries/incentives, and other fees) and reduce state spending on public services and education in particularly,. This situation worsens by the economic sanctions of the US in 1993 until now (RW.ERROR - Unable to find reference:223).

In Sudan where poverty hits about half of the population (contested figure, others see it beyond Kabaj, (Lubna 2011)), makes access to education which get not free anymore (other costs a part from tuition fees), (Adam 2013) unaffordable to many people especially poor. In these circumstances, poor face with few options to balance and make their decision regarding cost opportunity or education returns, in other words sending their children for schooling or to send them market labour or somewhere else to contribute to income of the household.

The financial resource that allocates to education is very tiny, comparing to spending on security for instance. Many authors agreed upon that, the limited resources that allocates to education is one of reason that led to education deterioration in Sudan. Moreover it shows lack of sufficient will of state and politicians towards education (Adam, Musa et al. 2003, Mudathir 2009, Lubna 2011), including the ministry of education as stated in NPEFA; “education becomes the last option for job seekers, which rarely to bring qualified persons, because of the poor payment” (Ministry of Education 2003). This has impacted negatively towards the quality and quantity of education provision which consider as one of school dropout drivers.

The analysis of school dropout within the context of Sudan, based on data reviewed including reports of the ministry of education and other materials from various sources relate to education in Sudan shows that, there is explicit violation to children rights regarding their right to education that recognized in the universal declaration of human rights and UNCRC, and other international and regional conventions, in addition to the constitution of the Republic of Sudan of 2008

The analysis show that, social exclusion occurs through continues violation of children right to education, which means denial of their right to education. Wide range of people has excluded actively through the state policies such as decrease expenditure on public service and education in particular and privatization of the education as well, which makes education inaccessible and unaffordable to poor. While the lack of state intervention to raise awareness among local communities to send their children to school and encouraging them to continue especially the girls, consider a sort of passive exclusion, in which the result also people deprived to exercise their right to education.

Nevertheless, excluding many individuals and groups did not limit to education and nor during certain period of time, but it does limit to certain geographical areas such as West Sudan, East Sudan, and parts of Central and North Sudan, this in addition to South Sudan until before got independent in year 2011. The comparisons established between different regional states in Sudan, show imbalance in the distribution of resources based on the geographical areas. This unequal distribution resources (Lubna 2011) generated sort of division brings about advantages areas where some states achieve high rates of school enrolment with law rates of school dropout (Northern and River Nile states), and disadvantages ones associate with law rates of enrolment and high rates of school dropout. Discriminatory policy tends to be appears through the state provisioning of public services generally and education particularly as articulated in the black book, (Demanders Group of Right and Justice 2003), (Lubna 2011) and (Mudathir 2009). While lack of schools and poor quality of class rooms, furniture and water and sanitation facilities, have negative impact in school enrolment and completion of schooling cycle, especially for girls (UNICEF, UIS 2011). However, the socio-cultural factor influences on school dropout in many areas in Sudan, where some people do not consider importance of education and do not expect much return from it. Whilst, other people pulling out their children from school for reasons relate religious and believes for instance some see the formal education is western education and does not links to their spiritual and religious life. Others consider it expressing religion of the majority and influenced by their culture values, while theirs religions, believes and cultures ignored and did not give consideration by state policy.

It is important to highlight that, school dropout remains as long as those barriers which affect the demand to education and its supply. In the demand side, poverty consider as the main barrier, in addition to gender violence and punishment decrease demand to school. Whilst, quality of classrooms, learning materials and sanitation facilities shaping barriers at school level. Lack of awareness among some communities regarding female teachers and the denial of sustainable education to IDPs and refugees children shape the socio-cultural barriers.

The contradiction of the information that published by Sudan government reports not only with information from other sources such as studies, workshop documents or media reports, but with many statements released by senior officers and governors (Howadia 2013). This draws the main challenge that the author has faced during the process, even some data from international organization such as UNICEF and UNESCO who works closely with government departments, seems they using copies of government data, while government data is not fully reliable (RW.ERROR - Unable to find reference:224). The author overcome the challenge by using materials form difference sources, and contact education officers and experts in Sudan for further cross check and inquiries in order to build the research argument and findings on concrete bases as possible.

Eventually, this research attempted to add a little to the literature concerning school dropout in Sudan and basic education. However, school drop in Sudan as in many other countries, is complicated and multi-dimensional issue where several factors intertwined. Therefore, it is important for one to say that, the topic still needs for more researches to be done, in order to explore and brings further insights.

Appendices

## Appendix 1



Figure 6: Students at class room at Al Wazazeen basic school-East Darfur

*Source:* S.A. Omer (NGO employee), 2013

## Appendix 2



Figure 7: Water facility at AL Nahdda Basic School in Nyala-South Darfur

*Source:* S.A. Omer (NGO employee), 2013.

## Appendix 2

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Figure 8: Poor school environment in marginalized regions in Sudan

*Source:* S.A. Omer (NGO employee), 2013.

Al Nileen Basic school in Khartoum State



Figure 9

Source: Sudanese online website, accessed 23 Aug 2013

Sudan geographical location in Africa



Figure 10

Source: www.google.com/image, accessed 9 July 2013

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