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Verification the causes of deterioration in basic education in Sudan

Dr. Mahdi Adam Othman Omer

Assistant Professor, English Language Department, Jouf University, Saudi Arabia.

Email:Mahdi_1972@windowsliveslive.com

Abstract

The current study aims to investigate the causes and solutions of the decline that happened during the last three decades at basic education in Sudan. To investigate this problem, the researcher strives to find answers for the following questions:1. Do the large gap in age at basic schools in Sudan has negative impacts on students' learning outcome? 2.To what extent does merging of intermediate and primary stages affect students' learning? 3. What factors that supposed to be have a direct impact on students' levels and behavioral decline? The researcher conducted qualitative and quantitative study to investigate participants' views toward the problem. The participants in this study were (280) students from different basic schools in Khartoum, (30) teachers, (15) headmasters and as well 15 headmistresses. The researcher used the questionnaire, interview and achievement test to investigate respondents' views and levels. Besides, some reports from students' files have been investigated. The reason is to investigate the change that happen in students' levels and some other factors. The study took place in Sudan during May, 2019 to June 2020. The results of the questionnaires show that, age variables, changing of education ladder and other factors have huge negative effects on student learning out comes and behaviors. As for the tests results and private reports, they also show a decline on students' levels and behavior. The study recommends returning to the previous educational ladder and policies.

Keywords: basic school, Educational ladder, and Sudan.



الملخص

تهدف الدراسة الحالية إلى التعرف على أسباب وحلول التدهور الذي حدث خلال العقود الثلاثة الماضية في التعليم الأساسي في السودان، وللتحقيق في هذه المشكلة يسعى الباحث إلى إيجاد إجابات للأسئلة التالية: ١. هل الفارق الكبير في العمر في المدارس الأساسية في السودان له آثار سلبية على نتائج التعلم للطلاب؟ ٢. ما مدى تأثير دمج المرحلتين المتوسطة والابتدائية على تعلم الطلاب؟ ٣. ما هي العوامل التي من المفترض أن يكون لها تأثير مباشر على مستويات الطلاب وتدهور سلوكهم؟ أجرى الباحث دراسة نوعية وكمية لمعرفة آراء المشاركين تجاه المشكلة. المشاركون في هذه الدراسة هم (٢٨٠) طالب وطالبة من مدارس أساسية مختلفة في الخرطوم، و (٣٠) مدرساً، و (١٥) مديراً، بالإضافة إلى ١٥ ناظرة. استخدم الباحث الاستبانة والمقابلة واختبار التحصيل لمعرفة آراء المستطلعين ومستوياتهم. إلى جانب ذلك، تم التحقيق في بعض التقارير من ملفات الطلاب. والسبب هو التحقق من التغيير الذي يحدث في مستويات الطلاب وبعض العوامل الأخرى. أجريت الدراسة في السودان خلال الفترة من مايو ٢٠١٩ إلى يونيو ٢٠٢٠. وأظهرت نتائج الاستبيانات أن متغيرات العمر وتغيير السلم التعليمي وعوامل أخرى لها آثار سلبية كبيرة على تعلم الطلاب وسلوكياتهم. أما نتائج الاختبارات والتقارير الخاصة فهي تظهر انخفاضاً في مستويات الطلاب وتدهوراً سلوكياً. توصي الدراسة بالعودة إلى السلم التعليمي القديم وذلك الرجوع الي سياسات التعليم السابقة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المدرسة الأساسية، السلم التعليمي، السودان.



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1.Introduction

Referring back to the history of the general educational system in Sudan before 1990, we notice that the education has passed through different stage of changes. It was structured as the follow: (6+3+3) which means, primary school was 6 years, intermediate school was 3 years and higher secondary school 3 years too. kindergarten was optional in the age of (3-6). Honestly, in 1989 there were five public universities, two private universities and the number of primary and secondary schools was not big, but the school system and the educational progress was very high in Sudan. In September 1990 the real decline and the continual downfall in general education has begun after the change that made by Sudan government in curriculum, educational ladder and other policies. The curriculum was emptied from its content and filled with Islamic studies, the Arabic language became the language of instructions and the primary an intermediate schools switched into one stage and reduced the two stage from 9 to 8 years, called basic school. No one can deny the change, but the change should be done through careful planning and logical reasons. The change that happen has disastrous impact not only on students' outcome but also on the educational process in general. Students' levels declined as the results of reducing one year from basic education, the curriculum became very poor, age variable led to spreading of bulling and different crimes against young students because of the huge gap in ages (6-15) years old, and there were other factors that affect learning negatively. Understanding the nature of these problems will help the researcher to find clear cut answers and solutions for many questions. From the other hand, many researches have been conducted in the same area in Sudan, but they were very limited in the domain of scope and still other factors remained uncovered and need answers. Thus, the researcher tries to



investigate these complex overlapping problems from different perceptive and try to fill this gap by understanding these factors and to find clear-cut answer for the problem. The most important findings of this study revealed that the change that made on the curriculum and the educational ladder has disastrous impact on students learning out comes. Switching of primary and intermediate school into one level has negative affect as well. Also, there were many other factors that consider to be a part of the problem. In short, according to my experiences in the field of teaching for more than a quarter of a century, and my close follow-up of the changes that occurred in basic education, I can say that, the factors mentioned above have led to general deterioration in the students' academic achievement, and immediate solutions should be done. Research finding in the same area support the points mentioned above. According to a World Bank report released in 2016, children across Sudan struggle to gain a public education, and as a result, more than 40 percent of children between the ages of 5 and 13 lack any kind of schooling.

UNICEF Annual Report 2016: Sudan. (www.unicef.org › Sudan › education) More than half a million children are at risk of dropping out of school. Sudan has one of the largest number of out-of-school children in the Middle East and North Africa region. It's estimated that over three million children here, aged 5-13 years, are not in the classroom. Seventy-six percent of primary age children attend school; in secondary that figure dips to 28 percent. At 43 percent, Blue Nile is the worst performing state for children who are out of primary school.

(IBE-UNESCO, 2012). Islamic values and heritage also became central to curriculum development at this time. For higher education,



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Muslim scholars were in charge of creating a new curriculum. Their initial project was to introduce Islamic heritage and Western scientific knowledge, but they lacked academic resources and learners needs.

A research study conducted by Mohammed-Ali Fadel-Elmawla is also congruence with the current study. In his study, he investigated the causes of current deterioration in standards of English language proficiency among pupils at the Sudanese general level of education, during the last two decades (1990-2010). In his study findings, he revealed that shortage in qualified trained teachers, reduction of teaching years, poor curriculum, and in addition to other factors as age variables, led to the huge decline in the basic education in Sudan.

Brown, 1995). Consequently, we must make every effort to establish and apply a wide variety of relevant and contextually appropriate criteria for the evaluation of the textbooks that we use in our language classrooms.

Library of Congress Federal Research Division (December 2004). The primary/secondary educational ladder of 6+3+3 years was switched in 1995 and during the Omar al-Bashir presidency and is scheduled, during the 2019 Sudanese transition to democracy, to return to 6+3+3 in the 2020/2021 academic year.



2.Methods and Procedure

In the current study, the research methodology is defined as procedure, data collection tools and interpretation. The basic aim is to achieve the purposes and the aims of this study. It is clear that there is no ideal method in teaching. However, the suitability of learners' needs and their levels can decide the methods and the needs of the study. In this study, the researcher used different methods, techniques and followed a certain guidelines strategy to achieve the study aims and objectives.

- Held open-ended interviews questions in order to interview every respondent separately, to get sensitive information and to know facts that respondents could not explain in questionnaires. (Kombo et al., 2006). In the interview a series of questions are addressed to the informants and the responses are recorded (Laws et al, 2003). Laws et al (2003) they further stretched that, in interviews the researcher may decide to interview every respondent separately or as a group. The interview is an effective method for knowing people experiences.

- Designed a questionnaire to investigate respondents' views towards the program and the factors that led to the decline in Sudanese basic schools learning outcomes and to find out the suggested solutions.

- Evaluating different curricula and methods used in basic stage with referring back to the researches findings that conducted in the same area. In addition, samples of many exam reports and proficiency-tests have been revised and compared with last three decades. The reason is to investigate the expected change in students' levels and the outcome.

- Attended around 20 different lessons in different schools.

- Requested some sensitive information from teachers, headmasters



and headmistress about students' behavior, tests system and others.

2.1. The total number of the participants in this study

The total number of participants in this study were (340) respondents. 280 students from different Sudanese basic schools, (30) teachers, 15 headmasters and 15 headmistresses as well. most of them have enough years of experience in teaching and management. The selected sample of students were from first year intermediate class up to class 8th.

2.2. Defining the variables of the current study

In this study, the variables were defined as independent and dependent variables. Independent variables were represented in the investigation made to investigate respondents' views toward the decline happen at basic education through a period of time., whereas dependent variables represented in the change that occurred in curriculum, learners etc...

2.3. Materials, instruments and other sources for gathering data

It is clearly noticeable that there were no accurate research findings related to the decline in the basic education in Sudan during the last three decades. Most researchers that conducted in the same area based on personal experiences and un accurate in findings, because most reports issued from the government were un dependable. Moreover, the state is the one who made this negative change in the education ladder, curricula and some other policies that had disastrous results in education. The state used to issue some reports related to curricula and evaluation, but most of these reports were inaccurate and had no credibility because it tried to prove the success of the project and the change that it claimed. Many reports issued by UNESCO, UNICEF and other organizations were insufficient to evaluate long-term decline and have no accurate statistical results about other factors. Regarding the above mentioned, the researcher followed the following steps:



- a. The researcher investigated different reports studies referred to different international organizations. E.g. UNICEF and UNISCO.
- b. conducted open-ended interviews and listened to different views of respondents and gave them the chance to express themselves freely.
- c. taught different English lessons to different levels using various methods and attended more than 30 classes with other colleagues.
- d. used the questionnaire as data gathering tool from respondents
- e. reviewing of different reports, the curriculum and proficiency tests.

As for the selection of the questionnaire and interview, they were chosen because of their suitability to the study, and accuracy in investigating the respondents' views towards the study's problem.

The questions were constructed based on the following points:

1. designed based on the research questions and the study needs.
2. self-experiences with support of experienced colleagues' advices.
3. The focus was on investigating the factors that supposed to have great influence on the problem, with respect to the declining and change that happen in education system during the last three decades.
4. using of simple clear instruction and diverse questions for easiness.
5. the questions have been submitted to the academics' experts in order to investigate their clarity and suitability to learners' level and the study needs. Based on their recommendations the researcher designed the questionnaire questions, interview and methods for gathering data.

2.3.1. The achievement test(evaluating students' learning outcomes)

The aim of the achievement test is to investigate the students' learning outcomes and their levels. The achievement test results were taken randomly from different students' mark of past 10 years and as follows:

1. Requested different achievement test reports of last ten years.
2. Investigated the percent of the achievement tests and compare the noticeable change in students' levels during the past three decades. As



for the validation of the questionnaire and procedures followed above, the researcher collected all the necessary data and reports from trustful, certified academic jury and specialist. The jury members and the teachers were requested to judge the clarity of the questions and their suitability to students' levels and the area need to be measure. Based on their recommendation and advices, the questionnaire was designed.

2.3.2. The study guideline (steps for achieving the study objectives)

As for conducting the study and achieving its objectives, the researcher followed the following specific instructions and guidelines:

- a. listened to all views that has great influence on problem solving.
- b. used appropriate steps to achieve the study need and objectives.
- c. defined clear learning objectives based on the program need.
- d. taught different sample lessons to investigate learners needs and levels. Based on the support of teachers, learners and managers, the study is conducted. Moreover, these different views have great influence on conducting this study. In addition, the researcher gave learners some guide and instructions to guide them to the objectives.

2.3.3 The Characteristic and features of current study

Effective program should be tied to student needs and achieves the desired goals and objectives. According to Newman (2001, p. 299). Strong instructional program flows from the use of a “common instructional framework guides curriculum, teaching, assessment, and learning climate. The framework combines specific expectations for student learning with specific strategies and materials to guide teaching and assessment. The distinguishing characteristics of this study are:

1. Under evaluating the decline occurred in students' learning outcome.
2. Investigating the real factors that had influence on the problem.
3. Using of various technique, methods and data gathering tools.
4. Gave the chance to the respondents to share their experiences.



3. General features of the basic education in the Sudan

Sudan like most other countries in the educational system. The education is compulsory and free of charge in the primary stages (from the age of 6 to 13) according to the international standard, and includes all educational stages for both males and females and for all ages, including adults, and covers large areas of Sudan. Before the last three decades, the pre-university educational ladder was an integrated curriculum consisting of (6-3-3) which means ,6 years of primary school, 3 years of middle school and 3 years of high school. In 1998, the salvation government in Sudan made a huge change in educational ladder, curriculum and switched the intermediate stage into primary school and became one stage called basic school starts from level 1-8 This change and policies led to disastrous impact on the education.

3.1 The challenges of the basic education in Sudan

According to (2002) World Bank estimates, the literacy rate among adults aged 15 years and over was 60 percent, and in 2000, the rate was estimated at 58 percent (69 percent for males and 46 percent for females). Young adults (15-24 years) are about 23 percent. As the educational loss multiplied dozens of times, and its victims are mainly from the children of poor and poor families for which education has become an unattainable luxury (there are about three million children out of education in rural areas and war zones). The illiteracy rate in the country increased from 37 percent to 57 percent, according to the National Council for Literacy, the level of university education declined. The big gab in age also became a problem, students from 5 years and 16 years in one school is also other challenge for the ministry of education. In addition to that, lack of infrastructure, Arabicization, spending and developing of new curriculum also is a big challenge. The Ministry of Education in Sudan decided to return to the old



educational ladder next year as a solution to all these problems.

3.2 Factors that have negative influence on education development

Based on the investigation made above through questionnaire, interview and reports, we can conclude that through the last three decades, there were many factors that led to the huge decline in the basic education in Sudan. They were various, interrelated, and have direct and indirect effect on this decline. The most effective ones are:

- **Wrong policies of the previous government:** Many policies and regulations that made by ministry of education led to disastrous decline in the basic stage. E.g. changing of curriculum and switching of primary schools into intermediate schools (changing of the educational ladder).

- **Untrained Teachers:** we often find lack of untrained teachers, supervisors and no enough training programs in rural and urban areas like Darfur.

- **Classroom size:** The number of student in class is big, especial in the rural area.

Poverty: poor families are not able to pay school fees and to spend on their kids needs at school, so they prevent them from schools.

- **Electricity:** in most rural areas the electricity is not connected in addition other vital services.

- **The internet** access is not available in most basic schools in Sudan.

- **Bullying:** Big gap in age led to bullying among students (6-16y.o).



- **Economy decline:** has huge negative impacts on students' behavior, learning outcome, and countless other factors.
- **The conflict:** The conflict causes instability in some schools.
- **Nomads:** It is not easy for the government to set a perfect program in some areas, because some students move with their families from place to another, especially in the rainy season.
- **Walking distance:** In some rural areas there are not enough schools to students' home, so students walk a long barrier, especially girls.

3.3. Identifying learner's needs

In any study investigation in education, the learner's needs should be the priority for the researcher or the teacher. The basic task for teacher is to discover, validate, and classify the learning needs. (Noessel, 2003). Each learner is unique, and brings to the learning situation his or her own different learning style, knowledge set, pool of past experiences, and motivation. In learner-centered instruction, it is important for instructors to consider the level of knowledge and skill development attained by the learners prior to instruction (Dick, & Carey, 2004). The needs of learners should be considered within the contexts of: age, curriculum, learning style, learning environment, etc... The best way for getting information is by investigating different views. In this study, participants were decided and the data gathering tools decided as well. As mentioned earlier, there is no single ideal method for gathering information, but the learners and the study's needs can decide the elements or the way we solve problems.



4. Data Analysis and Discussion

It is obvious that, understand problems and exploring the way of analyzing facts, figures, and interpreting into meaningful ways is so important for investigating all factors that related to the problem. In this study, the data have been analyzed and interpreted through tables and figures. The researcher used graphical representation, data explanation and statistical methods. The aim is to explain and interpret the questionnaire, interview's and achievement-test findings through statistical analysis. The researcher raised 3 basic questions of the questionnaire and 3 for the interview, in addition to some other reports.

4.1: Discussing, and interpreting of the questionnaire's results

4.1.1 The biographical data of the respondents' questionnaire

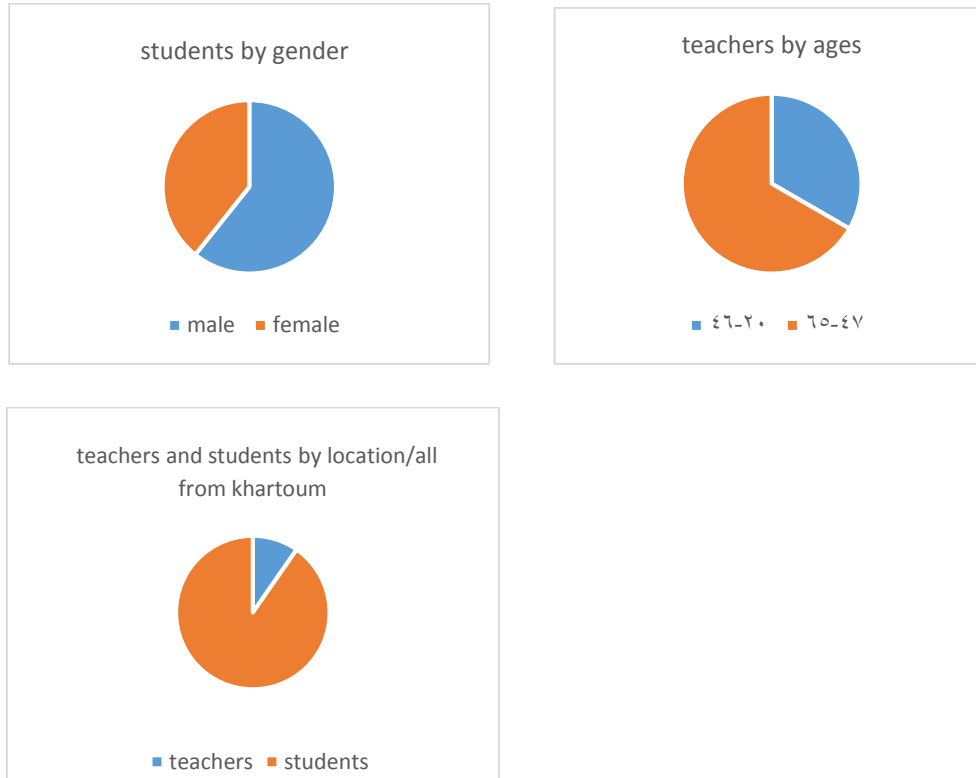
The biographical data of students and teachers' questionnaires include their age, gender and location. (table 1 and figures 1,2&3 bellow)

Table 1: Frequency and percentage of teachers and students

Subject	Age		Gender	location	Total/percent
teachers	26-46	47-65	15 males (4.4%)	Khartoum	30
	10	20	15 females (4.4%)		9 %
students	(6-16y)		170 males (50%)	Khartoum	280
			110 fem.(32.3%)		83%



Figure 1: Frequency and percentage of students and teachers



Interpretation of Data

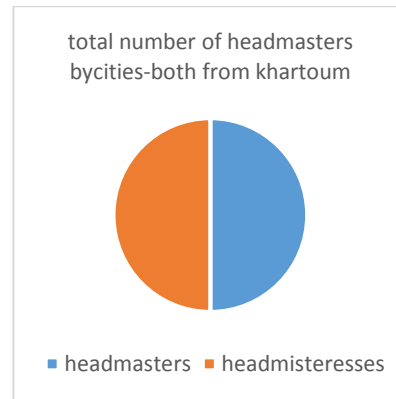
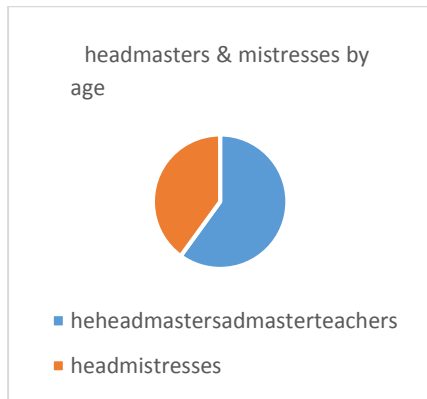
From the table 1 and figures 1, 2 and 3 above, we notice that most learners' ages range between (6-16) which reflect the huge gap between students' ages at basic schools. As for their gender, the researcher selected a sample of 170 schoolgirls and 110 schoolboys to answer the questionnaire questions. The study has been conducted in the capital city Khartoum, so most students 83% were living in Khartoum.

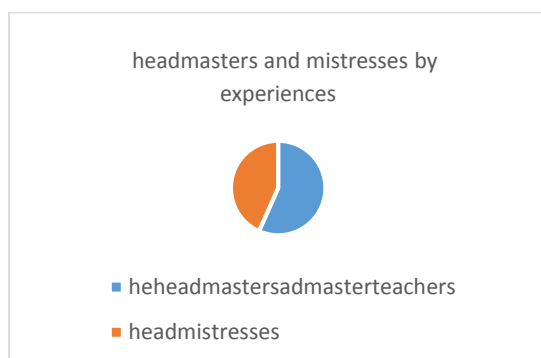


Table 2: Frequency and percentage of headmasters and headmistresses by age, years of experiences and qualification.

subject	age	experiences	cities	Total/percent
headmasters	(40-65y)	10-30	Khartoum	15
	12	17		4.4%
headmistresses	(35-60y)	10-30	Khartoum	15
	18	13		4.4%

Figure 4, 5 and 6: Frequency and percentage of headmistresses and headmasters, by experience, age and location (ref. to table 2 above)





Interpretation of Data

The table 2 and figures 4, 5 and 6 above, show Frequency and percentage of headmasters and headmistresses by age, experience and location. we notice that most respondents' had experiences above 10 years (between 10-30) years, their ages ranged between 40-60 years old, and all of them were from the capital city Khartoum.

Table 3: Identifying teachers' views toward the factors that affect the basic education in Sudan during the last three decades

Assessing question	Criterion of the problem				
	Subject	Agree	Disagree	Neutral	Total/percent
1.chnging of educational ladder have negative effects on basic schools	Teachers	23	2	5	30
2.educational policies led to huge decline in basic schools		27	1	2	
3.factors like age variables and in stability also led to educational decline		21	3	5	9%



N= 30

agree

disagree

neutral

Figures 7, 8 and 9 identifying teachers' views toward factors that affect basic education in Sudan during the last 3 decades.

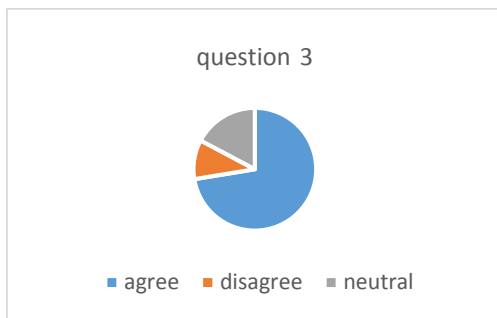
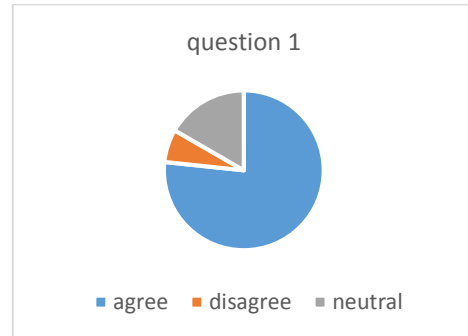
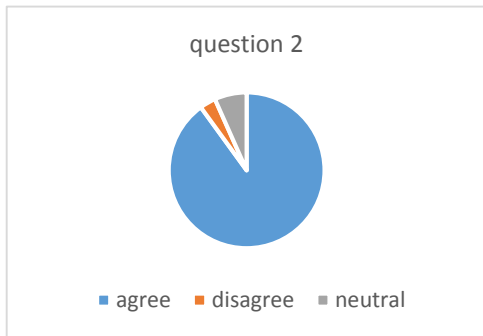




Table 4: Identifying students' views toward the factors that affect the basic education in Sudan during last three decades.

Assessing question	Criterion of the problem				Total/p ercent
	Subject	Agree	Disagr ee	Neutral	
1.chnging of educational ladder have negative effects on basic schools 2.educational policies lead to huge decline in basic schools 3.factors like age variables and in stability also led to educational decline	students	217	17	46	280
		255	15	10	
		222	17	41	

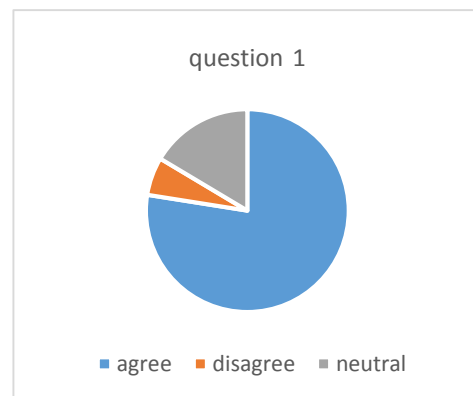
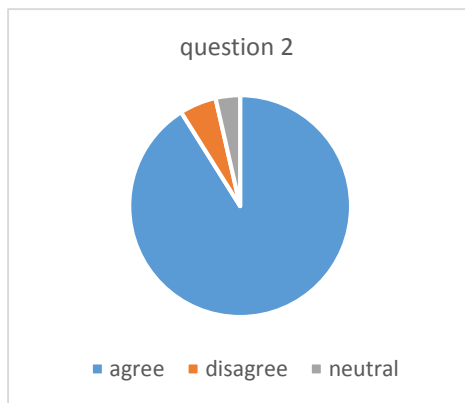
N= 30

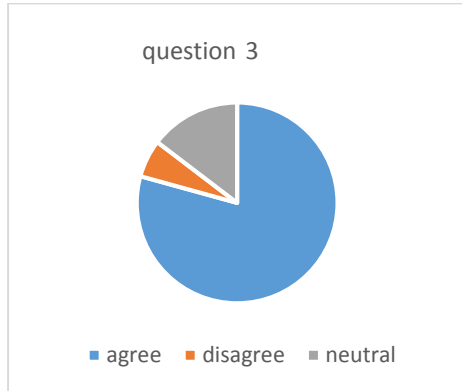
1=agree

2= disagree

3= neutral

Figures 10, 11 and 12 identifying students' views toward factors that affect basic education in Sudan during the last 3 decades.





Interpretation of Data

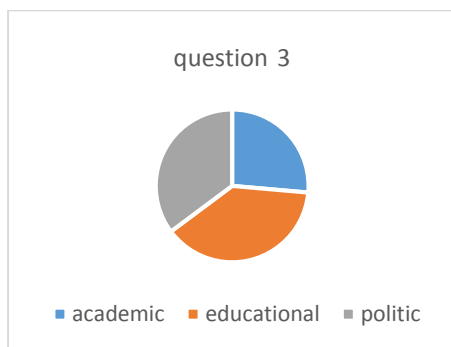
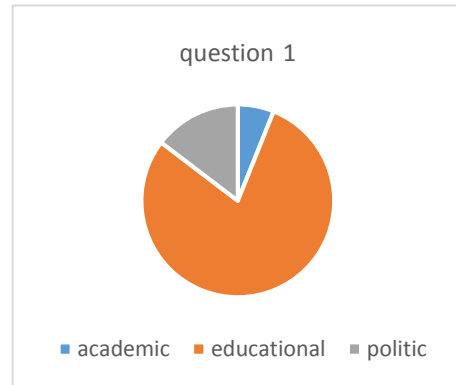
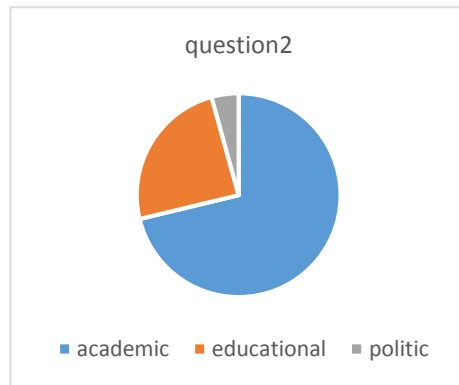
Table 3,4 and Figures 7, 8, 9, 10, 11and 12 above, identify students' and teachers' views toward the factors that led to the decline in basic education in Sudan. It is noticeable that from question 1,2 and 3 above, students and teachers are totally agreeing that changing of educational ladder, the government policies and other factors like the big gab in age led to this huge decline in basic education in Sudan (table 3&4).

Table 5: Identifying students' views toward the interview questions about factors that affect their learning outcome and behaviors.

Questions/reasons	Academic	Economical	Political & others	Total/percent
1. reasons for students' behavioral decline	17(6%)	222(79%)	41(15%)	280 100
2. reasons for the declining in learning outcome	116(41%)	57(21%)	107(38%)	280 100
3. reasons for dis interest in learning	66(24%)	96(34%)	88(32%)	280 100



figures:13, 14 & 15 Identifying students' views toward factors that affect students' learning outcome and behaviors at basic schools.



Interpretation of Data

Based on the interview questions, the majority of students believed that the most effective factors that led to the decline in students' behavior, learning outcome and their disinterest in joining basic schools in Sudan were the three factors mentioned in the bellow interpretation. It is noticeable that 79% of students believe that the basic reason of behavioral decline at basic schools is economic reasons, 17% believe it



is academic reasons and only 15% believe that it is political and other reasons. As for declining in learning outcome, the majority of students 116(41%) believe that the reason of declining the learning outcomes is academic, 107(38%) believe it is political & other reasons, and 57(21%) believe it is economical reason. As for disinterest to study, the majority 96(34%) believe the reason is economical, 66(24%) believe it is academic and 96(34%) believe it is financial reason(economic).

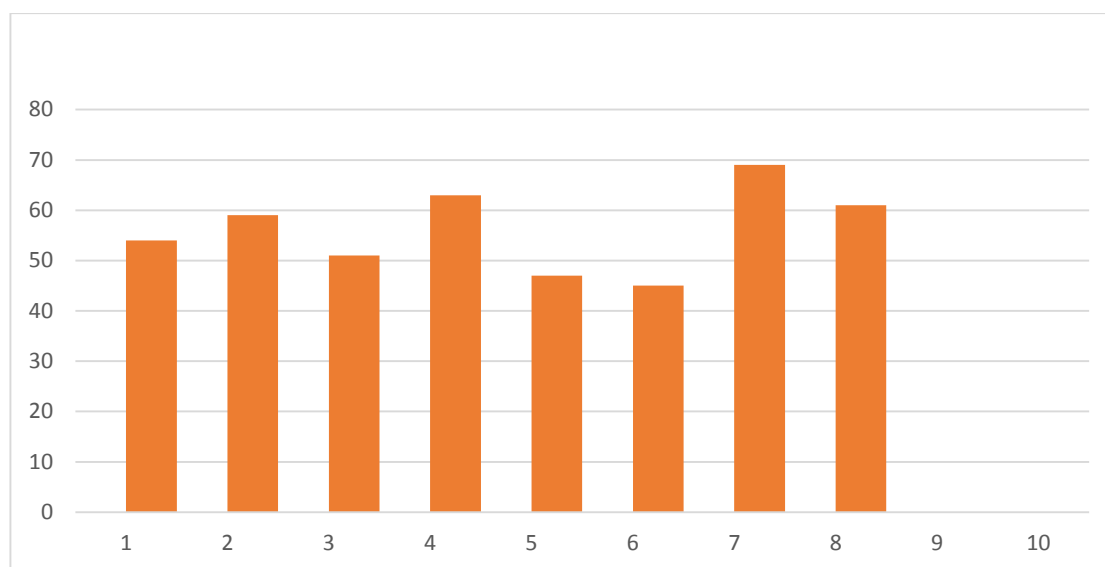
Table 6: Random samples from students' percent of the achievement test from different basic schools in Khartoum

schools	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total
Exam percent%	54%	49%	51%	63%	47%	54%	69%	61%	100%
Testees number	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	10	80

1,2,3,4,5,6,7&8 =school number



Figure 16: Random samples from students' percent of the achievement test from different basic schools in Khartoum



The number of schools in order 1,2,3,4,5,6,7&8

Interpretation of Data

Table 6 and above show the random percent of students in achievement test conducted to 80 students from different schools in Khartoum. The percent to some extent consider to be low. The highest percent was 69% and the least was 47% which reflect the decline in students' level in comparison with other exam results that conducted before the change that happen in the educational ladder and curriculum. The test included questions from level 1-8 in addition to general information.



4.2 Conclusion

The conclusion that can be drawn from the findings of questionnaire, interview and the achievement test is, there is strong relation between the results of the achievement test and the decline that happened in students' level and learning outcome. It is noticeable that students' score was low in comparison with other test results. As for the questionnaire and the interview results, respondents were totally agreed that factors like changing of curriculum, educational ladder and other factors affected leaning outcomes and led to the huge decline at basic schools. This result congruence with many research result conducted by many researchers. For example, according to a World Bank report released in 2016, children across Sudan struggle to gain a public education, and as a result, more than 40 percent of children between the ages of 5 and 13 lack any kind of schooling. More than half a million children are at risk of dropping out of school. Chodavarapu Jalal (2004) said that on the basis of broad objectives, curriculum planning should be done and suitable subject content, behavioral outcomes and other learning experiences be put in for making curriculum comprehensive. To conclude, the disastrous change that made in curriculum and educational ladder at basic school by our x government, cannot be fixed in one year, so for our new government should start to make it gradually and based on well thought out plane. Further, the government should also put into the account the effect of the economic declining and as well as other factors that have huge negative influence on students' learning outcomes and behavior.



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