Challenges Encountering International Education in Sudan

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ABSTRACT

This study aims at exploring the challenges encountering international education in Sudan. The descriptive research design was adopted. An interview was used to collect the qualitative data whereas the questionnaire was utilized to collect the quantitative data. The participants of the study were the teachers related to international education in Sudan. Findings have suggested that managing the rapid growth of international schools, staff professionalism, positively impacting the national education are among the major challenges facing international education in Sudan. Findings have also revealed that the expansion of international education to cover all the states of Sudan, creating overseas partnership and complying with international standards are among the key challenges encountering Sudanese international education.

Keywords: internationalism, professionalism, overseas, partnership, qualitative

Abstract (Arabic Version)

المستخلص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة الى استقصاء التحديات التي تواجه التعليم العالمي السوداني. حيث تم استخدام منهج البحث الوصفي. فقد تم جمع البيانات النوعية بواسطة المقابلة الشخصية بينما تم الحصول على البيانات الكمية بواسطة الاستبانة. تكون مجتمع الدراسة من المعلمين الذين ينتسبون الى مدارس التعليم العالمي السودانية. أشارت نتائج الدراسة الى أن التحكم في النمو السريع للمدارس العالمية ، و مهنية الكادر التعليمي ، و التأثير إيجابا على التعليم القومي من ضمن التحديات الرئيسة التي تواجه التعليم العالمي السوداني . و قد كشفت النتائج أيضا أن توسع التعليم العالمي ليغطي كافة ولايات السودان ، و خلق شراكة مع مدارس عالمية ، و مطابقة المواصفات العالمية تعتبر أيضا من التحديات الرئيسة التي تواجه التعليم العالمي السوداني .

كلمات مفتاحية : العالمية ، مهنية ، خارجي ، شراكة، نوعي.

INTRODUCTION:

Given the noteworthy quantitative increase, in recent decades, of schools which transcend strictly national interests and local government restrictions on educational provision, the emerging notions of international education, international schooling and interculturality as applied to the sphere of education, have received much attention from scholars, researchers, educators, practitioners and administrators alike (Murphy, 1991, James,2007, Hayden, 2006 and Marshall, 2007). Such notions arguably embrace a wide-ranging conceptual framework, which includes ideological and economic concerns. Teasing out some of these concerns in an attempt to identify the salient features of international schooling and international education in the 2l't century and appreciating how they are experienced by a small group of professionals operating in that field will be a focus of this study. Educational discourse has held international education to be many things to many people. International education is presently enjoying.

aniche market position where students - future global knowledge workers - may arguably gain, on several levels, in competitive edge on their domestic counterparts (Lowe, 2000).

For instance, a student who has undertaken a recognized form of international education may be better able to move up the credential ladder (Brown and Lauder, 2004, Lauder, 2007).

With job scarcity an ever-increasing reality and unemployment rates escalating worldwide, belonging to an international school which promotes Reich's (2001) notion of a symbolic analyst is perceived to be a viable educational alternative for students and parents. The symbolic analyst is one who is able to identify problems by rearranging the symbols which represent reality into workable units i. e. IT, maths, and languages. It is the use of knowledge and not its mere creation that is central here. The international education experience has been considered, in this sense, as a mechanism for securing upward mobility (Lauder, 2007). Recognition by leading universities in the western world of the value of such an educational exposure lends further weight to this analysis.

There fore, in the context of the Sudan, it has been observed that the international education is faced with some obstacles.

For instance, the schools do not meet the international standardizations in terms of staff qualification, infrastructures and academic accreditation.These factors together may hinder pace of the international education towards internationalism.

On the other hand, the denseness of international schools in Khartoum might be one of the rationales for conducting this study.

This is due to the fact that doneness of schools in Khartoum deprives the other regions of the benefits of international education.

In this way, the noble message of international education will not be inclusive. **Thus**, in the current study, the researcher proposes to review the current status enjoyed by international education of the Sudan by reporting and analyzing the views of group of teachers working in the field of international education in Sudan.

Study Question:

What are the challenges encountering international education in Sudan?

1.**Study Hypotheses:**

Managing the accelerated growth that international schools are witnessing is expected to be one of the challenges facing Sudanese international education. Creating a positive impact on the national education is also expected to be one of the challenges facing international education.

2-Staff professionalism is another challenge that mayface international education in Sudan.

4.Literature Review

International education for Thompson (1998) includes the need for exposure to others of different cultures within a school, a teaching staff which were exemplars of world mindedness, exposure to others of different cultures outside of the school setting, a balanced curriculum as well as a management regime which is value consistent with the pervading institutional philosophy.

Selby (2003) sees world mindedness as 'a commitment to the principle of 'one world' in which the interests of particular societies and nations are viewed in light of the overall needs of the planet' (title page). It is, in essence, the ability to think transnationally. **Wilkinson** (1998) stresses the need for an international faculty representing a wide variety of cultures, backgrounds and teaching styles for true international education to flourish. As agents of change or role models for students, teachers, facilitators and educators are seen as crucial in the fostering of international understanding and worldmindedness.

This critic contends that 'the international nature of an education does not have meaning unless it has a clear, real relationship to what is national' (P. 231) echoing clearly the principle tenet of the IBO which views mastery of a first tongue of paramount importance in order to appreciate cultural roots and the ability to make meaningful cross-over comparisons with another world view.

Wilkinson (op.cit.) further sees international education as a force for change believing that 'a school that purports to provide an international education must address the issues that divide deeply the rich and the poor of our world' (op. cit, p. 232).

Gellar (1993) appeals for international education to be focused less on a statistical or quantitative basis but rather that it should be qualitative in outlook. By this he means that idealistically catering for divergence and an international attitude would instil a greater dimension to international education. In a later work (Gellar, 1993) posits that it is fundamentally the interactive student-student element of school life rather than the international curriculum per se which enhances a variation on worldmindedness which he terms to be 'international-mindedness'. Exposure to an international and intercultural type education would allow exposees to appreciate diversity of the worldviews and experiences available (James, 2007). Thompson (1998) employed the metaphor of a brick-wall to explain the essence of international education.

'The wall' in the metaphor represents the whole institutional learning while 'the bricks' are a balanced approach to teaching, the formal classroom context which includes the delivered curriculum. 'The cement' which binds the bricks thereby forming and solidifying the wall would be the unplanned learning, the Pastoral Care programme and the extra-curricular provision. These three elements all combine to promote interstitial learning. With the admixture of cultural diversity - from all constituents and stakeholders - and administrative styles, the 'wall' would be given a particular robust quality Thompson calls internationalism. At the heart of internationalism would be Jones' (1998) democratic foundation which is 'the development and application of international structures' (p. 143).

In his review of the development of international curriculum as one component of international education, Thompson (1998) offers four well recognised categories: 'Exportation', 'Adaptation', 'Integration' and 'Creation'. 'Exportation' is seen to be when an existing national curriculum is marketed abroad.

This implies, at one level or another, that national tastes and biases are essentially maintained.

UK Advanced Level examinations taken in Thailand or Singapore are working examples of an international curriculum with a domestic basis. 'Adaptation' is when a national curriculum recognises the need for context difference for use abroad. Here the inherent value system of the programme is not modified.

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Recognition of overseas specificities is somehow incorporated to take into consideration alternate needs, a variety of views (to include cultural ones) and local experiences.

International General Certificates of Secondary Education (IGCSEs) have been adopted by many overseas schools for junior years.

My own school, St. Paul's, has 'bought into' this curriculum viewing it to be a valuable programme which allows the specificities of our school to be recognised whilst allowing candidates to be tested according to a British framework. 'Integration' is seen to be the notion of 'best practice' from successful curricular. Here, value systems are mixed. The Bilingual Diploma Programme for the IBO is a working example. 'Creation' is when new programmes from first principles are devised. Such an endeavor would require major in-put, not least at a purely financial level, on the part of investors and participants. The United World Colleges' 'initial programme' probably reflects this pedagogical desire. This programme, which aims at instilling a sense of community spirit in its student body, fosters an understanding that the 'them and us' gap can only be reduced through a cooperative stance. The 'Constructive Engagement of Conflict programme' at the Armand Hammer United World

College in the US which teaches students methods of resolving disputes is another example.

Walker (2000 a) sees, essentially, three strands or distinctive features in international education. They comprise:

1. An understanding of the meaning and importance culture plays in the educational process;

2. A study of global issues, which may include assessing human rights and appraising environmental developments;

3. The justification of evaluating the human condition from various angles and approaches.

Arguably, it is only by answering some of the afore-mentioned issues that a more robust picture of the nature of international education may emerge thereby allowing the formulation of working models.

If we acknowledge, at a fundamental level, that an international education goes beyond an equivalent national (domestic) type, a starting point in this exploration can be established. Examples in the UK, although limited, can be found.

Thompson's (1998) model of a learning environment for international education should be seen as a three-dimensional reality wherein cultural diversity (students, teachers, parents governance), administrative styles and a balanced curriculum (knowledge, skills, concepts, attitude, understanding) interconnect at various degrees and overlap as basic features of the ethos of any such school.
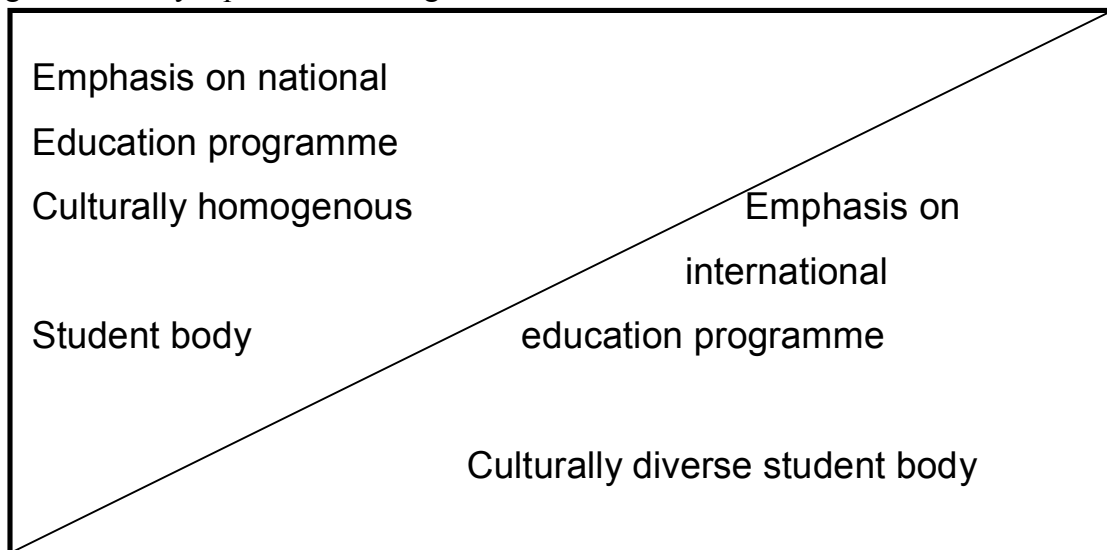
The school's mission statement or philosophy statement would have to reflect such realities in order to be 'international'.

Schwindt (2003) builds on Thompson's model advocating the addition of an international minded approach to the curriculum as well as a real commitment to the lifelong learning phenomenon. 'International education', Schwindt (op cit) posits, 'needs to look beyond the primary and secondary stages and prepare for continued internationalism in tertiary education and the world of work' (p. 73).

Terwilliger (1972) postulates that at least four criteria need to be met in order for a school to be classified as international:1. School enrolment should include a noteworthy percentage that possessas nationalities other than the geopolitical location of the establishment;2. Members of the board of governors should also differ from their host nation and to reflect the percentage differences amongst the student body;3. The teaching faculty or common room should reflect a range of nationalities;4. A taught, formal curriculum which did not reflect the sole interests of either the host nation or another dominant faction should be available.Hill (2006) placed intercultural understanding at the heart of any international schooling. The range from National Schools (with a culturally homogenous population) which offer a state regulated curriculum to International Schools (per se) with a maximum cultural diversity could arguably pass by an internationally minded national school or even an international school with a national curriculum. Hill readily admits that many schools around the globe are not easily codified and that a permeability factor between school types should not be underestimated.

He diagrammatically represents the range as follows:

Emphasis on national

Education programme

Culturally homogenous   Emphasis on

                                          international

Student body   education programme

                        Culturally diverse student body

Materials and Methods

The mixed method research design was adopted. An interview was utilized to collect the qualitative data whereas a questionnaire was utilized to collect the quantitative ones. The population of the study were the teachers working at international schools in Sudan. The number of participants of the questionnaire was 50 while the number of participants who were interviewed was 9. The selection of the teachers based on several criterions such as experience, commitment and willingness to participate in the study. After piloting both the interview and the questionnaire, data collection started. With regard to the interview,

the teachers were interviewed individually at schools premises. The questions of the interview had already been prepared by the researcher.

They comprised four variables:

(1) Managing the accelerated growth of international schools;
(2) The necessity of staff professionalism;
(3) The possible impact made by international education on the national one and
(4) Meeting the criterion of internationalism.

The researcher recorded the responses provided by the interviewees. Each interview lasted four about 7-9 minutes.

Data Analysis of the Questionnaire

On the other hand, the data of the questionnaire were collected after finishing the interviews. The questionnaire was administered in an easy way because the researcher made use of the International School Conference that has been held in Khartoum recently.

In this conference, most of international school teachers attended this conference. So, during the breaks, the questionnaire was distributed. All the respondents were able to complete it.

After finishing data collection, they were coded and analysed.

Figure 1: Staff professionalism

Staff profesionalism

It is clear that 48 percent of the respondents strongly agree with the necessity of the staff professionalism. This value is supported by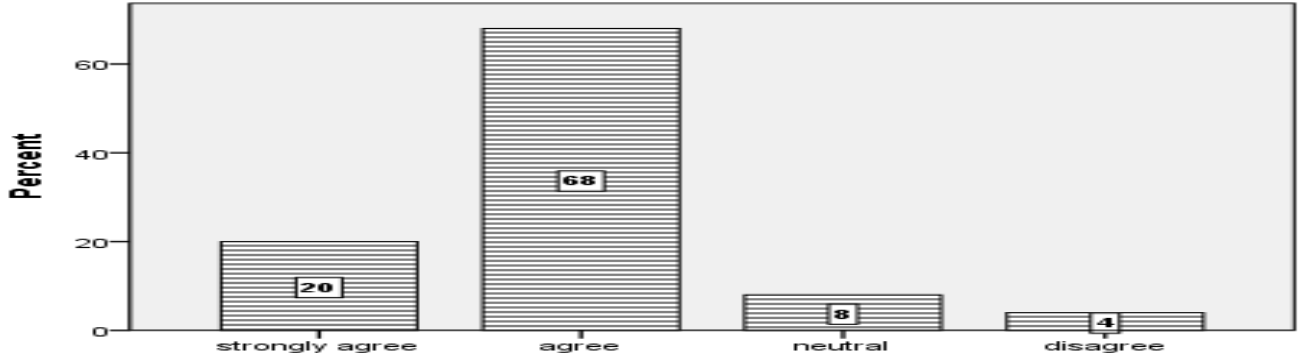 the agreement of 52 percent of the respondents. This may signal that staff professionalism is of paramount importance to international schools.
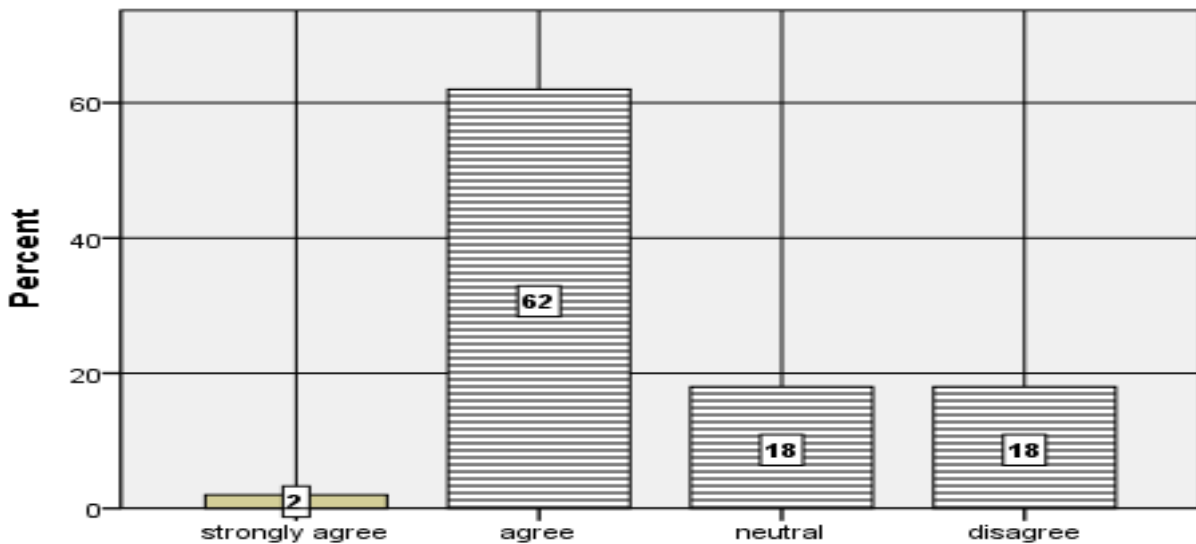
Figure 2:   Impacting the national education

It is quite evident that 20% of the respondents strongly agree that positively affecting the national education is a real challenge encountering international education. This idea is similarly supported by the agreement of 68% of the respondents. In contrast, 8 percent who have been neutral and 4 percent have disagreed with this idea. This indicates that only 4% of the respondents do not see that affecting the national education is a challenge facing international education.

Figure3: Covering all the states of the Sudan

Regarding the expansion of international education so that all the states of Sudan are covered, the figure shown above indicates that 62 percent of the respondents have agreed with this value as being a challenge facing the international schools.2 percent of the respondent have similarly supported the idea.   18 percent have been neutral compared to 18 percent of the respondents who have not seen this as a challenge.

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Figure 4: managing the growth of international schools

It is clear that 52 percent of the respondents view that managing the rapid growth of international education has become a real challenge encountering the international education. This idea is also shared by 38 percent of the respondents. However, 4 percent of the respondents have not regarded this idea as a challenge compared to 6 who are neutral.

 Analysis of the Interview Only one question was addressed to the interviewees:What are possible challenges that encountering international education in Sudan?
Participants
1:'' I think managing the enormous growth of international school has recently become a real challenge''.

 This statement entails that managing the rapid growth of international education is a real challenge. This is due to the fact that growth requires expansion in all aspects of learning process. For instance, an increase in the number of learners requires an increase in the number of staff, rooms, courses, teaching aids, etc.   So the availability of these requirements is conditioned by the availability of plenty of money. Thus schools have to find ways for generating enough money such as creating investment projects.

Participant 2:
''It is quite evident that the international school graduates might suffer a lot when joining national universities''.
 In this statement, the respondent addresses a problem (the suffering of international schools graduates when joining national higher education). This suffering is mainly attributed to the inconsistency in teaching aids, code (language) used in teaching, courses being delivered etc.
 An interesting solution to this problem is the availability of an affiliate of renowned universities such as Cambridge or Oxford. This branch would undoubtedly create a sort of transition in the quality of international education.

 Participant 3:
'' international schools should positively impact national education'' The underlying message of this statement is positively impacting national education. This could be achieved by inspiring the national education.

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The inspiration of the national education could be achieved via making it follow the example of international schools. Thus international schools would become a complementary tool for national education in terms of exchanging experiences, staff training, etc.

Furthermore, international schools can assist national ones by constructing and rehabilitating libraries, schools, playgrounds, etc.

Participant 4: ''It is observed that most of the international schools are located in Khartoum''.

The above-mentioned statement entails that the vast majority of the international schools are located in Khartoum.

As a result, the role and the noble message of the international schools are limited to one area. Thus, regions are marginalised and hence deprived from the values provided by international schools.

What is required is an urgent expansion of international schools so that all the regions of the country are roughly covered.

Participant 5: '' I think it is a very instrumental question. For me, internationalism is determined by certain criterion. So the international school is the school that has

(1) clearly articulated its objectives, vision and mission;

(2) fully-equipped learning environment;

(3) certified courses, qualified staff related to various cultural and ethnical backgrounds;

(4) complied to international standards and

(5) been academically accredited**''.**In the aforementioned statement the respondent stresses the need for internationalism suggesting certain criterion for achieving it.

Participant 6:''Learning English as a second language indicates that the courses being prescribed appear more difficult than those designed for the students who learn English as a foreign language. Thus, the schools have to be aware of the level of their students in English then they can evaluate and specify the type of courses accordingly.

If not, the students' standards would be deteriorating''.

The aforementioned statement addresses the need for whether adopting English as a foreign or a second language in international schools and the consequences might be produced accordingly.

Participants 7:'' Of course, projecting the national identity, culture and traditions could be gained via participating in national and international festivals''.

It is quite evident that the role of international schools is really great. That is, international schools can assist in mirroring the national culture and shaping the national identity.

Participants 8 & 9:''

We think that meeting international standards for quality assurance is key to crating overseas partnership and guarantee international education sustainability''.

It is clear that respondents eight and nine have both asserted the need for meeting international standards for quality assurance.

In conclusion, it could be inferred that all the interviewees have unanimously agreed that international schools are faced with a number of challenges suggesting that guaranteeing quality assurance is fundamental to overcome these challenges.

Discussion and Verification of the Study Hypotheses The current study aims at exploring the challenges encountering international education in Sudan. A questionnaire and an interview were used to answer this question. It is worth mentioning that the interview has been used as a supportive tool

to the questionnaire. Data analysis has indicated that the vast majority of the respondents agree that managing the accelerated growth of international education, the need for staff professionalism, the need to influence national education and the need for expanding international education are among the challenges facing international education in Sudan.

Surprisingly, the respondents of the interview have indicated more challenges such as the creating overseas partnership, meeting international standardizations, assisting in solving national conflicts, adopting English language as either a second or a foreign langue and the possible scenario of the future of international education.

Conclusion, Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Studies

In light of the aforementioned findings, it is conceptualized that all international schools could overcome their obstacles and obtain some merits, if they comply to and believe in the international standardizations.

In this way, quality assurance will be achieved and hence sustainability will be guaranteed. Thus, joining the international institutions for academic accreditation such as the British Council is strongly recommended by the researcher. On the other hand, a large-scale study with a large number of subjects should be conducted so as to have insight into the current challenges encountering the international education in Sudan.

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