

## Teaching History in Higher Education Institutions of Learning in South Sudan: A Call for Change

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Copyright © 2025 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.	<p><i>This article examines Teaching History in Higher Institutions of learning in the Republic of South Sudan that has obtained its Independence on 9 July, 2011 from the Sudan. The objective is to investigate the already existed curriculum in the old Sudan. And why courses related to South Sudan history were less than other foreign courses like Arabic courses and even European courses. The author is trying to analyze the negative trends of the past curriculum before the achievement of the Independence of South Sudan from the North Sudan the methods used is description and explanation or mixed approaches.</i></p>
<b>Citation:</b> Dr. Daniel Thabo Nyibong Ding. (2025). Teaching History in Higher Education Institutions of Learning in South Sudan: A Call for Change. UKR Journal of Education and Literature (UKRJEL), Volume 1(3), 59-63.	<p><i>History as a discipline is traditionally centered on peoples, culture countries and regions, but everything has a history that can be described and studied. Teaching history implies knowledge, knowledge is truth. The truth is everywhere the same. Therefore, education should be everywhere the same. The findings have indicated that ignorance of history, you would allow yourselves to be governed by the unknown past. So if you are ignorant of science, you will never believe in hidden forces working onwards to a happier future. It concludes that history is a single discipline practiced in many professions, in many ways and through many means.</i></p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> History Curriculum, South Sudan, Higher Institutions, Wars, Independence and a change environment.</p>

### Introduction

#### The people of South Sudan

There are many different African ethnic groups or nations living in South Sudan, each with its own set of traditional values, norms, practices, and beliefs. The Republic of South Sudan has 64 different nationalities. People who reside south of the tenth parallel have called people who dwell north of it Arabs for many years. As is the case with teasing history, Arabs and Africans were put together in a country called Sudan.

In 1956, Sudan attained its Independence from Britain. The Arabs brought their Arab and Islamic cultures, the Islamic faiths and the Arabic language. Arabs had their cultures webbed around Islamic religion and Arabic language. The rulers in Sudan tried to bring about national unity through

Islamic religion and Arabic language. According to Smith, A. (2005:373-391) “, curriculum is thus often seen as an ideological or political tools”<sup>1</sup>.

On 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2011, South Sudan became independent that marked the national identity of the African nationalities. These tribes include Acholi, Aja, Anywaa, Avkaya, Bai, Baka, Belanda (Bwor), Belanda (Bviri), Banda, Bari, Beile (Jur Biel), Binga, Bongo, Boya, Chollo (Shilluk) Didinga, Dongotono, Feroghe, Gollo, Hufra, Imatong, Jieng (Dinka), Jiye, Jur Man Angier, Kakwa, Keliku, Koma, Kriesh, Kuku, Lango, Logir, Lokoya, Lofit, Lugbwara, Lulubo, Luo (Jur Chol), Mabaan, Madi, Mandari, Makaraka, Moro, Morokodo, Mundu, Murle, Naadh (Nuer), Naka, Ndogo, Ngungule, Nyangwara, Nyiepo, Otuho (Latuka), Pari, Pojulu, Riel (Atwot), Shatt (Thuru), Seri, Suri (Kachipo),

<sup>1</sup> Smith, A. 2005

Tenet, Tid, Toposa, Uduk, Yulu, Zande<sup>2</sup>. These are 64 South Sudan ethnic groups.

### **Curriculum of Higher Education Institutions in Sudan**

I am hereby trying to analyze the negative trends of the past in curriculum of Higher Education Institutions in Sudan. Considering University of Juba, Learners take 21 course units for award of BA Education with a history and Geography. Of these 21, 8 are for studying the Arab and Islamic history. Four (4) course units are devoted to studying Africa. Of the 21 course units, only 4 units are for studying the history of Sudan. History encourages learners to approach them from angles not considered by their subjects or forms of study in the curriculum.<sup>3</sup> 12 out of 21 course units are devoted to Islamic history. The Sudan is studied from the perspective of the current Sudan. South Sudan is not mentioned anywhere in the curriculum. The South Sudan exists within the history of Sudan, but not independently. The movement and settlement of the 64 nationalities of South Sudan does not arise. There is nothing about the history of South Sudanese resistance to foreign occupation. There is nothing about the Torit Revolution. No mention is made of the Anyanya. The Independent nation should have its own curriculum to reflect the aspiration and interests of the people. Popular papers call them rebels or mutineers. But they should be called freedom fighters. History books teach us about our own culture and the cultures of other countries. Books do more than only make you feel good. Colleges and universities are the only big social institutions that are solely focused on promoting information, understanding, intellectual conversation, and the search for reasoned debate in all its forms. There is no way for a university to contain all the texts or cultures that should be recognized in a liberal democratic education. No free society, much less a university of autonomous academics and teachers, can anticipate consensus on difficult decisions involving conflicting goods.

The quest for acknowledgment may attain fulfillment solely through a system of mutual recognition among equals.<sup>4</sup>

### **Wars of Independence.**

The Arab and African cultures became incompatible (inconsistent or conflicting). This incompatibility resulted in wars of Independence. However, on 9<sup>th</sup> July, 2011, South Sudan became independent. Learning history entails significant conceptual transformations in students' comprehension of historical narratives and the concepts employed within the discipline.<sup>5</sup>. These historians

thereafter present the concept of historical futures, attributing theoretical influences and acknowledging intellectual obligations to conceptual kin. They characterize historical futures as the multiplicity of transitional relationships between perceptions of the past and projected futures.<sup>6</sup>

### **The Changing Environment: It Is Time for Change**

In Sudan, education was used to promote national unity through Arabic language and Islamic religion. The time has come for South Sudan 64 nationalities to become visible. It is time for the Aliab , Dinka, Ngundeng Bong, Gbatali, Gbudwe ( Yambio, king) etc because they struggled for freedom to be known. It is time for the history of many years of the struggle for independence to be known. This is time to call them freedom fighters but not rebels or mutineers any more, it is time for South Sudan to be embedded (tucked in) in Africa. The aspirations and interests of the people of South must be reflected. Human beings are changing environment in lots of different ways. These changes often affect the living things in them. All living things depend on their environment to live and provide them with the essentials of life-light water, nutrient and air. From the way population change to survive in new environment. Human beings are changing our environment sometimes for better and sometimes for the worst

### **History curriculum (South Sudan Universities)**

Colleges and universities should work to create courses that meet the needs of South Sudan. When these institutions defend the core curriculum that speaks to our situation, culture, and intellectual history, they should know who we were and who we are. They should also try to close the huge gap between them and their counterparts in the richest countries. People think they can't produce good graduates who can solve important national problems. Curriculum is a collection of studies and skills that are based on goals, values, and ideas that are based in a rich culture and history. The curriculum is the major way that the education system organizes teaching and learning. It is also an important way for students to learn how to interact with others, since it directly and indirectly teaches them values and attitudes. It is also quite political and very controversial because it includes some knowledge but not others. People typically think of the curriculum as a political or ideological weapon.<sup>7</sup> Teaching bad things about specific groups can make inequities seem okay. This can be even worse if there is already prejudice against certain groups in the education system, including when some groups have more access to

<sup>2</sup>Peter Adwok Nyaba,2023: P.380

<sup>3</sup> The National curriculum History working group in the final Report in April.1990,p.14

<sup>4</sup> Charles Taylor, the politics of recognition, p.56

<sup>5</sup> Mikko Kainulainen, Marjaana Puurti,(2019),Historians and conceptual change in history itself.

<sup>6</sup> Zoltan Boldizsar and Marek Tanim (2021)" Historical futures: History and Theory 60 (1):3-22

<sup>7</sup> Smith,2005,p.268

education than others.<sup>8</sup> What is in the official curriculum is very important for lowering stereotypes across groups and developing identities that aren't exclusive. But the big problem is making sure that the curriculum encourages peace instead of conflict, which has to do with identity. General objective of history curriculum is to equip learners with information about South Sudan, Africa and World.

Higher institutions of learning in South Sudan must take this politico-historical change as a changing environment. History curriculum should include: Ancient history of South Sudan-movement and settlement of the 64 South Sudan nationalities; the scramble and partition of Africa; Turko-Egyptian and Mahdia in South Sudan; the Anglo-Egyptian in South Sudan; and South Sudanese struggle for Independence.

In University of Juba, there are 4 out of 21 course units to be devoted to studying the history of South Sudan. History as a science 1(one) out of 21 course units. World, 4 out of 21 course units. New curriculum should be worked out to meet the aspirations and interests of the Republic of South Sudan by not depending on the curriculum of Sudan. Strange, considering that the history courses in university could easily have been changed by the history department of University of Juba. South Sudanese have been running the department for over ten years.

## Conclusion

The Republic of South Sudan has many traces of history. These include folktales, songs, works arts, archaeological objects etc. South Sudanese historians need to capture all these sources for the future unknown. This is the changing environment or changed environment. Human beings can change environment in many different ways. From the way, the population change to survive in the new environment. Universities should look for different ways to get money to pay for their activities. The higher education institutions of learning in South Sudan should find resources to finance their activities starting with changing the curricula in higher education institutions of learning to reflect the aspirations, needs and interests of the people of South Sudan. According to Currie and Newson (1998), institutions are increasingly "defining their activities in terms of business rather than of education"<sup>9</sup> . However professional qualifications should be recognized as a valid in the country of professional practice, in order to acquire the right to pursue a professional activity. There is need to record a

South Sudan history. Relying on historical evidence requires confidence rather than a surplus of data. History is a great mind-strengthening, mind-expanding subject. To get right to the point, the goals whose justification is not up for debate have always been learning about ourselves, our history, our environment, our cultures, our languages, our political system, and the history, culture, language, and politics of societies that are either particularly interesting to us or are close by. Including lessons on our nation's past, present, and culture in school curricula is quite appropriate. But we need to know who we are as a people before we can study our culture.<sup>10</sup> Everyone should be honoured for their own distinct identity. According to Hutchins <sup>11</sup> "Education implies teaching, Teaching history implies knowledge. Knowledge is truth. The truth is everywhere the same." But we can't overlook the fact that there could be disparities in how things are set up.in the way things are run and in the way people do things in their own areas. So, education should be the same everywhere. Because they didn't know much about history, they let the mysterious past control them. You won't believe in hidden forces pushing things toward a better future if you don't know anything about science.

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<sup>8</sup> Gardener,2002 p.268

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### About the author

Professor Daniel Thabo Nyibong was the former, Dean, College of Education. He served as the state minister of Education, Gender and Social welfare in Fashoda State/Kodok from 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2016 to March 2017. He was appointed as Adviser for peace and Reconciliation in Central Upper Nile State. He is currently member Chairperson of the Specialized Scientific Committee of Education and Humanities in the Republic of South Sudan, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, National Council for Higher Education.

Professor Daniel Thabo holds PhD at the Institute of African and Asian Studies, University of Khartoum. He also holds MA in history from Faculty of Education, University of Khartoum. He did his undergraduate studies at the University of Juba, College of Education, and Department of History. He currently teaches undergraduate and graduate courses. Professor Daniel Thabo has published widely in the field of history in journals, periodicals, magazines and books

### Preface

I would like to express my sincere honor, gratitude and appreciation to the leadership of Professor John Apurut Akec, Vice Chancellor of University of Juba for making this event possible today. I am really happy to have come this far. It has been a long and difficult way, with lots of challenges in the process.

In this lecture, I would like to discuss Teaching History in Higher Education Institutions of Learning in South Sudan: A Call for Change. First of all I would like explain or define history as a discipline. History is the study of the human past .History is a single discipline practiced in many professions, in many places, in many ways and through many means. It is written and defined by the individual. History as a discipline is traditionally centered on people, cultures, countries, and regions, but everything has a history that can be described and studied.

Historians study records of past events. They prepare new records based on their research. These records, as

well as the events themselves ,are also commonly called history<sup>12</sup> .Historians define history as the study of past events, how they change and how they influence the current and the future . History is the basis of all subjects of study which fall under the category of humanities and social sciences. It is often said to be the” queen” or the “mother” of social sciences.

My main concern is the change of curriculum of history taught in our universities to reflect the aspirations and interests of the people of South Sudan. But it is not meant to identify the authors who wrote books on South Sudan.

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5. Kenneth Okeny,” political structure and institutions in Southern Sudan 1820-1885”
6. Francis Mading Deng,” the Dinka and their songs.”
7. E.E.Evans Pritchard, ”the Nuer: A description of the modes of livelihood and political institution of a Nilotc people, 1940>”. However, what they have written are not adequately included in the history curriculum in the Republic of South Sudan. Since South Sudan is now independent, these documents and records should be used in the Curricula of higher institutions of learning in South Sudan. At the moment, they are just read on individual basis. This should change to reflect the change environment Despite, the achievement of the independence of South Sudan, the teaching of history in higher education in South Sudan has not changed. There is therefore, need to initiate a change to reflect this reality.

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<sup>12</sup> The World Book Encyclopedia,1983, p .232