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Hunger for an Education: A Research Essay on the Case of South Sudan and the Voices of Its People

John Chuol Kuek

La Maestra Community Health Centers, kuekjohn@yahoo.com

Roberto J. Velasquez

California State University, San Bernardino, dr.robertovelasquez@yahoo.com

Jeanett Castellanos

University of California, Irvine, castellj@uci.edu

Diego R. Velasquez

Southwestern College, Ongosan12@yahoo.com

Elva Nogales

Southwestern College, enogales@kingchavez.org

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Hunger for an Education: A Research Essay on the Case of South Sudan and the Voices of Its People

Abstract

The Republic of South Sudan is one of the newest of all African countries having become an independent state on July 9, 2011. After years of prolonged war, beginning in the mid-1950s, among different political, tribal, and military factions, and with the Sudan, the South Sudan is now a full-fledged country. The country continues to deal with the legacy of colonialism, genocide, and oppression, and is involved in a civil war. As a result of this legacy, the country faces many challenges especially in the development of a social, political, and economic infrastructure which can develop into a democratic state and implement a viable public school system that can feed universities and technical schools. At this time, approximately 42% of the country's population is below 14 years of age, and the "school life expectancy" index is only four years for males and even less for females. The educational system in the South Sudan can be described as disorganized, fragmented, and a "patchwork" of schools that are seasonal and temporary, and with a disjointed mission. Also, each of the ten states that comprise the country seems to function independently although there is a master plan for the overall country. Yet, common to all of these states is the lack of school buildings, teachers and support staff, and an organized and proven curriculum for all of the nation's youth. For this research essay, five South Sudanese persons, with a role in education were interviewed to identify the most critical problems in the current educational system. While the results of interviews are limited in representative scope, the results are strongly reflective of the condition of the educational system in the South Sudan. Various recommendations are suggested by the authors.

दक्षिण सूडान गणराज्य 9 जुलाई 2011 को एक स्वतंत्र राज्य बनने के सभी अफ्रीकी देशों के नवीनतम में से एक है। लंबे समय तक युद्ध के वर्षों के बाद, विभिन्न राजनीतिक, आदिवासी, और सैन्य ग्राहियों के बीच, 1950 के मध्य में शुरू, और सूडान के साथ, दक्षिण सूडान अब एक प्ररण विकसित देश है। देश उपनिवेशवाद, नरसंहार, और उत्पीड़न की विरासत के साथ संघर्ष करने के लिए जारी है, और एक नगरिक युद्ध में शामिल है। इस विरासत का एक परिणाम के रूप में, देश विशेष रूप से एक लोकतंत्रिक राज्य में विकसित और विश्वविद्यालयों और तकनीकी स्कूलों को फीड कर सकते हैं कि एक व्यवस्थित पब्लिक स्कूल प्रणाली को लागू कर सकते हैं जो एक सामाजिक, राजनीतिक, और आर्थिक बोनियरी देखने के विकास में कई चुनौतियाँ हैं। इस समय, देश की आबादी का लगभग 42% की उम्र 14 साल से कम है, और "सकल जीवन प्रत्याशा" सूचकांक प्रारंभ के लिए केवल चार साल है और भी कम महिलाओं के लिए। दक्षिण सूडान में शिक्षण प्रणाली, बेतरतीब खंडित, और मौसमी और अस्थायी है कि स्कूलों की एक "विथडे", और एक असंबद्ध मिशन के साथ के रूप में वर्णित किया जा सकता है। इसके अलावा, देश शामिल है कि दस राज्यों में से प्रत्येक में समग्र देश के लिए एक मास्टर प्लान है, चूंकि वही स्वतंत्र रूप से कार्य करने लगते हैं। फिर भी, इन राज्यों में से सभी के लिए आम स्कूल भवनी, शिक्षकों और सहयोगी स्टाफ की कमी है, और देश के युवाओं के सभी के लिए एक संगठित और सिद्ध पाठ्यक्रम है। इस शोधनिबंध के लिए, शिक्षण के क्षेत्र में एक भूमिका के साथ पंच सूडान दक्षिण व्यक्तियों, वर्तमान शिक्षण प्रणाली में सबसे महत्वपूर्ण समस्याओं की पहचान करने के लिए बातचीत की गई। संघर्षकार के परिणाम प्रतिक्रिया व्यय में सीमित कर रहे हैं, परिणाम दक्षिण सूडान में शिक्षण व्यवस्था की हालत का दृढ़त से विचार कर रहे हैं। विभिन्न सिफारिशें लेखकों ने सुझाव दिया है।

南苏丹共和国是非洲最新成立的国家之一，它于2011年7月9日宣布独立。经过了开始于20世纪中叶的长期战争，经过与苏丹不同的政治、族群以及军事宗派间的斗争后，现在的南苏丹是一个羽翼丰满的国家。国家持续与殖民主义、种族屠杀和压迫做斗争，并卷入内战。结果，国家面临着很多挑战，特别是社会、政治以及经济基础设施的发展可以使南苏丹发展为一个民主和独立发展大学、技术学校的公立学校系统的国家。如今，大约42%的国家人口年龄小于14岁，男性“人均预期受教育年限”指数只有四年，女性则更少。南苏丹的教育系统可以用混乱、脆弱以及“缝补”的临时性学校来形容。尽管整个国家有着宏大的计划，但似乎组成这个国家的十个州是独立运作的。这十个州的共同点是缺乏学校建筑物、教师和员工，以及全国年轻一代所需要的课程设置。本研究中采访了五个在教育中担任职务的南苏丹人，他们总结出目前南苏丹教育系统中最关键的问题。尽管访谈的结果在代表性上具有局限性，但结果仍然强烈地反应了南苏丹教育体系的现状。作者相应地提出了多种建议。

Die Republik Süd-Sudan ist einer der neuesten aller afrikanischen Länder, die am 9. Juli 2011 ein unabhängiger Staat geworden ist. Nach Jahren anhaltenden Kriegs, beginnend in der Mitte der 1950er Jahre zwischen verschiedenen politischen, Stammes- und militärischen Gruppierungen und den Sudan ist der Süd-Sudan jetzt ein vollwertiges Land. Das Land kämpft weiterhin mit dem Erbe des Kolonialismus, Völkermord und Unterdrückung und ist in einem Bürgerkrieg verfallen. Infolge dieses Erbe steht das Land vor vielen Herausforderungen vor allem bei der Entwicklung einer sozialen, politischen und wirtschaftlichen Infrastruktur, die es zu einem demokratischen Staat entwickeln und ein tragfähiges öffentliches Schulsystems implementieren kann, das Universitäten und technischen Schulen zu unterstützen in der Lage ist. Gegenwärtig sind etwa 42 % der Bevölkerung des Landes unter 14 Jahren alt und der Schulbesucherwartungsindex („school life expectancy“) beträgt nur vier Jahre für Männer und noch weniger für Frauen. Das Bildungssystem in den Süd-Sudan kann man als desorganisiert, fragmentiert, und ein „Flickenteppich“ von Schulen, die nur saisonal und befristet operieren, und mit einem separaten Auftrag. Auch jeder der zehn Staaten, die das Land bilden, scheint unabhängig voneinander zu funktionieren, obwohl es ein Masterplan für das gesamte Land gibt. Doch alle diesen Staaten gemeinsam ist der Mangel an Schulgebäuden, Lehrpersonen und Unterstützungsmitarbeiter_innen sowie ein organisiertes und bewährtes Lehrplan für die Jugend des Landes. Für das vorliegende Forschungssessay wurden fünf süd-sudanesische Personen mit einer Rolle im Bildungsbereich befragt, um die wichtigsten Probleme im aktuellen Bildungssystem zu identifizieren. Während die Ergebnisse der Interviews in Bezug auf ihre Repräsentativität begrenzt ist, sind die Ergebnisse stark kennzeichnend für den Zustand des Bildungssystems in Süd-Sudan. Verschiedene Empfehlungen werden von den Autor_innen vorgeschlagen.

9 Temmuz 2011' de bağımsızlığını ilan eden Güney Sudan Cumhuriyeti Afrika'nın en yeni ülkelerinden birisidir. 1950'lilerin ortasında farklı siyasi, kabile, ve askeri gruplar arasında ve Sudan' la başlayan, uzun yıllar süren savaştan sonra Güney Sudan bugün bağımsız bir ülkedir. Güney Sudan sömürgeciliğin mirası, soykırım ve baskıyla uğraşmaya devam ederken aynı zamanda iç savaşla uğraşmaktadır. Almış olduğu mirasın sonucu olarak, Güney Sudan özellikle kendisini demokratik devlet haline getirecek ve üniversiteleri ve teknik okulları destekleyecek uygulanabilir kamu eğitim sistemini sağlayacak olan sosyal, politik, ve ekonomik altyapının geliştirilmesi konusunda zorluk çekmektedir. Şu anda ülke nüfusunun yaklaşık olarak yüzde kırk iki'si on dört yaş altındadır ve okul hayatı beklenti endeksi erkekler için sadece dört yıl, kadınlar içinse dört yıldan daha azdır. Güney Sudan eğitim sistemi düzensiz, dönemlik, ve daimi olmayan okulların tutarsız bir misyonla parçalandığı eğitim sistemi olarak tanımlanabilir. Ayrıca her ne kadar ülke genelinde ana bir plan olsa' da, ülkeyi oluşturan on eyaletin her biri bağımsız olarak hareket ediyor görünmektedir. Oysa ki, eyaletlerin tamamında ortak olan nokta okul binalarının, öğretmenlerin ve destek personelin, ve ülke gençliğinin tamamı için hazırlanmış ve onaylanmış müfredat programının eksikliğidir. Bu araştırmada mevcut eğitim sistemindeki

en ciddi problemleri tanımlamak amacıyla eğitim sisteminde rol alan beş Sudanlı kişiyle mülakat yapılmıştır. Her ne kadar mülakat sonuçları kapsam açısından sınırlı olsa' da, sonuçlar Güney Sudan eğitim sisteminin mevcut durumunu önemli ölçüde yansıtmaktadır. Bu bağlamda yazarlar tarafından çeşitli önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

جمهورية جنوب السودان واحدة من أحدث الدول الإفريقية بعد أن أصبحت دولة مستقلة في 9 يولييه عام 2011. فبعد سنوات من الحرب الطويلة التي بدأت في منتصف خمسينات القرن العشرين بين فصائل سياسية وقبيلية وعسكرية مختلفة، وكذلك مع السودان، أصبح جنوب السودان الآن دولة مستقلة كاملة السيادة، وتستمر الدولة في التعامل مع ما خلفه الاستعمار والإبادة الجماعية والقهر، كما أنها متورطة في حرب أهلية. نتيجة لذلك الإرث، تواجه الدولة العديد من التحديات، بالأخص فيما يتعلق بإنشاء بنية تحتية اجتماعية وسياسية واقتصادية تمكنها من التطور لتصبح دولة ديمقراطية تطبق نظاماً تعليمياً حكومياً صالحاً يمكنه أن يمد الجامعات والمدارس الفنية. وفي الوقت الحالي، حوالي 42% من سكان الدولة دون سن الأربعة عشر عاماً ومؤشر "عمر القبول بالمدارس" هو أربعة أعوام فقط للأولاد، بل وأقل من ذلك للفتيات. ويمكن وصف النظام التعليمي في جنوب السودان بأنه غير منظم ومفتت وأنه "عمل غير مكتمل" لمدارس تعمل بصفة موسمية ومؤقتة وبهدف غير مترابط، كما يبدو أيضاً أن كل ولاية من الولايات العشرة التي تتكون منها الدولة تعمل بمفردها بالرغم من وجود خطة شاملة للبلاد بأكملها. ويبقى الشيء المشترك بين جميع هذه الولايات هو قلة المباني التعليمية والمدرسين والموظفين المساعدين ومنهج دراسي منظم ثبتت كفاءته لجميع شباب هذه البلاد. ومن أجل عمل هذا المقال البحثي، جرت مقابلة خمسة أشخاص من جنوب السودان لهم دور في العملية التعليمية لتحديد أكثر المشكلات خطورة في نظام التعليم الحالي. وبينما كانت نتائج أفراد المقابلات محدودة فيما يتعلق بالنطاق الذي يمثلونه، عكست النتائج بقوة حالة النظام التعليمي في جنوب السودان، ويقترح المؤلفون العديد من التوصيات.

Keywords

South Sudan, primary education, secondary education, higher education, education policy, post-conflict education

Cover Page Footnote

This manuscript is a research essay, which is distinguished by its reliance on systematic and empirical data coupled with an essay approach to the interpretation and presentation of the authors' perspectives and opinions.

HUNGER FOR AN EDUCATION: A RESEARCH ESSAY ON THE CASE OF SOUTH SUDAN AND THE VOICES OF ITS PEOPLE

John Chuol Kuek¹

La Maestra Community Health Centers, USA

Roberto J. Velasquez

California State University, San Bernardino, USA

Jeanett Castellanos

University of California, Irvine, USA

Diego R. Velasquez

Southwestern College, USA

Elva Nogales

Southwestern College, USA

The newly-independent country of South Sudan is anchored to the bottom of the world league table for education. More than half of its primary school age children – over 1 million in total – are out of school. Young girls are more likely to die in pregnancy or childbirth than to graduate from primary school. South Sudan's young people face restricted opportunities for the education they need to build a better future for themselves and their country. It is time for the world to come together and change this picture. (Brown, 2011, p. 11).

The South Sudan: An Overview of a New Nation

The Republic of South Sudan is one of the youngest countries in Africa having become independent from the greater Sudan on 9 July 2011. As a result, the history of the South Sudan is indelibly linked and intertwined with the history of the Sudan, which gained its independence from Britain and Egypt in 1956 (Brown, 2011; Deng, 2006; McArdle, 2013; World Health Organization, 2012). Today, there are over ten million South Sudanese spread over 10 geographic states, with a majority of the population now concentrated in rapidly growing cities such as the capital, Juba. Also, there remain many South Sudanese refugees in both neighboring

¹ *Correspondence:* John Chuol Kuek, 3969 Charles St. La Mesa, California 91941, USA; Email: kuekjohn@yahoo.com

and distant countries who want to return home (Kuek, 2012a, 2012b; Lin, 2011; Levink, 2012; Murray, 2010). Born out of a lengthy history of colonization by different foreign powers, with different cultural, social, political, and religious values, South Sudan is engaged in a “nation building” enterprise, which is difficult and complicated given that the country is composed of over 100 tribes with their own respective dialects, values, customs, and belief systems (World Health Organization, 2012). In addition, war continues to erupt throughout the country resulting in many casualties and deaths, largely due to tribal fighting.

The South Sudan is also one of the poorest countries in the world and has many endemic problems including a poor health status, with an average life expectancy of 42 years for its population (Downie, 2012; Wakabi, 2011). A review of the scant research literature indicates that the nation’s health problems have received more attention than traditional education. This includes the treatment and prevention of public health problems such as malaria, tuberculosis, Hepatitis E, HIV, dengue, and black fever, which continue to affect the population at high rates (Adams, Omer, Salih, Khamis, & Malik, 2008; Mandal, Purdin, & McGinn, 2005–2006; Wakabi, 2011). The infant mortality rate is considered one of the highest when contrasted to other emerging countries, while the maternal mortality rate is also the highest in the world (Rai, Ramadhan, & Tulchinsky, 2012; World Health Organization, 2012). About 32%, or one in three, of children below five years of age are considered to be medically underweight and at risk for many childhood illnesses (Onyago, 2012).

Also, few research studies have examined the mental health status of the South Sudanese, which is a result of constant violence, displacement, and warfare prior to and after the independence of the country. In fact, a significant proportion of the population may have PTSD (Boniface, Khasim, Manikese, & Dijkman, 2009; Roberts, Damundu, Homoreo, & Sondorp, 2009). Investigators have also examined the mental health status of South Sudanese children, especially the “Lost Boys” who were forcibly recruited by war lords in the long civil war with north Sudan to become soldiers (Candilis-Huisman, 2008; Petronis, 2009). In developing mental health interventions for persons affected by war, a primary focus has been on educating the population about depression and trauma through public health-oriented education programs. Also, successful public education programs have been developed to control communicable diseases. Yet, while the current ministries of education brag about a national plan of education, especially for children, no action has occurred with regard to the strengthening and organization of a school system.

In 2004, it was estimated that there were only three surgeons serving South Sudan, with only three semi-functional hospitals (over-populated and understaffed). In some areas, it was estimated that there was just one doctor for every 500,000 persons. According to the World Health Organization (2012), the country currently has only about 1.5 medical doctors per every 100,000 citizens and only 37 hospitals that are considered functional (Baird, 2011; Baird & Boyle, 2012). The report also indicated that up to 4,600,000 persons, or half of the total population, are in need of some type of humanitarian aid because of severe poverty, geographic isolation, unemployment, and lack of education, especially high rates of illiteracy (WHO, 2012).

Yet, in spite of the many medical conditions that have affected the population of the South Sudan, public health programs, as rapid educational interventions, have been quite efficacious in controlling the above-mentioned conditions and decreasing both infant and maternal mortality rates (Adams, Omer, Salih, Khamis, & Malik, 2008; Baird & Boyle, 2012; Boniface, Khasim, Manikese, & Dijkman, 2009; Downie, 2012; Mandal, Purdin, & McGinn, 2005–2006; Onyango, 2010; Rai, Ramadhan, & Tulchinsky, 2012; Roberts, Damundu, Lumoro Sondorp, 2009; Wakabi, 2011). That is, a type of education, grounded within public health

theory has empowered South Sudanese persons to make both cognitive and behavioral changes through a focus on preventive health methods. In many ways, this form of mass education, while conducted under sometimes catastrophic and crisis situations, does provide evidence that the South Sudanese people are receptive to diverse types of education, be it for children or adults (Brown, 2011; Hovens, 2002; Serpell, 2011). Thus, if there is evidence that public health education has reduced the presence of many medical problems it is possible that a well-orchestrated public education school system could also significantly impact the youth of South Sudan.

Education in South Sudan

A systematic review of the research literature on education in the South Sudan yields few results for several possible reasons. First, the country is so new that investigations have yet to appear in professional journals and other types of publications, and, second, studies prior to 2011 treated the educational system of South Sudan as simply a part of the Sudan. Also, it is important to observe that even before the independence of the South Sudan, researchers primarily focused on the educational needs of north Sudanese students who were primarily Muslim, while avoiding research on Christian youth in South Sudan. Perhaps this lack of interest was largely spurred by social, political, and religious factors that ultimately contributed to a poor educational infrastructure in the South Sudan even prior to its independence. In spite of the dearth of research literature on education in South Sudan in general, there is one report authored by Gordon Brown in 2011, which deserves special attention.

Brown (2011) notes that 80% of the population in South Sudan is considered illiterate, with such extremely low school expectancy rate that current school-aged children are at risk of becoming a lost generation. And yet, the rate is even much lower for female students who have been traditionally excluded from school by the government and society. Of the country's population, 42% are school-aged, being below 14 years of age. The report also notes that the language of education was transitioning from Arabic to English, which implies a major paradigm shift in education given that language primarily transmits culture, ideas, and values, or a socio-psychological world view. Brown also highlights the absence of a physical infrastructure including permanent school buildings as well as a lack of teachers who can teach a contemporary English language-based curriculum.

Moreover, teacher training programs are rare in South Sudan (Brown, 2011). At the same time, an over-representation of temporary or "seasonal" foreign teachers, many of which have a minimal understanding of South Sudanese culture, has created an inconsistent and arbitrary delivery of knowledge to students. The report also alluded to the absence of systematic outreach to students in isolated geographic regions, such as the Southeastern part of Jonglei, which leaves children with a "patchwork" of an education. The report also notes that the systematic closure of private colleges and universities, as well as specialized technical schools was a grave mistake because these schools helped in creating an educated workforce (Lado, 2012; Perold, 2001).

In 2010, South Sudan Development Plan (2011-13), through its two ministries of education, organized a conference titled the "The Education Reconstruction Development Forum." The conference, intended to create a national dialogue about the fundamental problems in South Sudan's educational infrastructure, did not have the intended effect (South Sudan Development Plan (2011-13)). However, a persistent situation in South Sudan is a significant gender gap between teachers and students (Brown, 2011). The fact that the majority of teachers are male, with a near absence of female teachers further marginalizes female

students, in particular. Furthermore, a high school student to teacher ratio of 300 to 1 means that learning necessarily takes place in overcrowded classes (Minister of Education #1, 2012-13). The lack of support staff such as librarians, school counselors, and psychologists, which are staples in many educational systems and especially relevant for children with special needs, is evident as well (Brown, 2011). The South Sudan also lacks modern technology, such as computers, for both teachers and students, from primary to university levels (Brown, 2011).

In 2010, the ministries of primary and secondary education and higher education respectively, targeted the year 2020 as the year that the country's educational system is expected to be at optimum levels of functioning. Yet, this target date seems ambitious given the continuing economic and political problems in this country including corruption and misappropriation of funding (Cheung & Chan, 2008). In addition to economic sustainability, there remain pockets of resistance related to customs, religion, and ideology, including the belief that females are not entitled to an education. Finally, there remain the vestiges of hundreds of years of colonialism contributing to classism, tribalism (the byproduct of colonization), and male chauvinism (i.e., anti-female attitudes) (Cheung & Chan, 2008).

In 2012, Masungu conducted the first-ever survey of a small South Sudanese sample in an effort to better understand the concerns of citizens and the priorities of the educational system. The primary findings of this non-random survey concluded that the South Sudan educational system is largely in a state of crisis because it is decentralized, disorganized, and still influenced by the old guard which consists of educators who were trained under the British or Egyptian systems. This investigation also found an educational system that is ineffective, insensitive, and highly affected by corruption from within the classroom at all levels of management.

Unlike Masungu's (2012) findings, which were limited to the general public and did not include parents or students, our investigation gauged the current attitudes of stakeholders at all levels of the current educational system in the South Sudan. We purposely targeted a news reporter, who has extensively covered educational developments in the South Sudan before and after its independence, two current representatives of the ministries of education who are responsible for the implementation of educational programs, and the father of a current student and his female daughter. The key question posed to these persons was; "Since the independence of the South Sudan, what do you view as the most pressing problem (s) in the educational system?"

Participant Description

The first author, who is a native of the South Sudan, was responsible for conducting the interviews. Given that this study focused on interviews, the research design is considered to be qualitative. Moreover, given the sensitivity of this issue within current government circles, the identity of each participant was strictly held confidential by the investigators. That is, the interviewer found that there remains a lot of fear amongst the participants of government persecution and oppression.

A snowball participant sampling method was done through personal contact with the news reporter, who is based in Juba, who then recommended the two educational ministers and the parent and student (Lim, 2008). The only participants, who are related to each other, are the father and the daughter. The reporter is a 36 year old male, while one of the representatives of the ministry of education is a 40-year-old male, and the other is a 56 year old male. The parent is a 37-year-old male, while the student is a 14-year-old daughter. All resided in the South Sudan, including the towns, Jonglei, Malakal, Northern Bahr el-ghazal, and Juba, the capital of the South Sudan. The interviews were conducted over a two month period between 1

December 2012 and 31 January 2013. All of the interviews were conducted on the telephone and in English, with the interviewer being in San Diego, California (USA). All five participants consented to be interviewed with the understanding that their identity would remain anonymous.

Table 1 in presents the answers to the key question, which asked participants what they felt the most pressing problem in the educational system of South Sudan is since its national independence. While the participants' responses to the question varied in length, the key parts of their responses are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Participant responses to the key question posed by the interviewer.

Participant	Participant Responses
News Reporter	<i>“One of the greatest problems affecting our new country today is the continued problems and rivalries between the different tribes which has included severe violence and which has forced the government to pay a lot of money to police, security, and military forces. These problems are so severe that it is not unusual for the government to come to a complete standstill on a daily basis to the point that nothing functions in the country, not the transportation system, not the stores and markets, and not the schools. To me, the tribal problems, if not resolved, will bring this country down. I feel very bad for the children because, at times, no one seems to care for them, and many of them are likely to wander in life with no sense of contributing to their own existence”.</i>
Minister of Education Representative #1	<i>“The major problem in the South Sudanese educational system is that we have no buildings for our students and teachers (Overcrowded Facilities). We, the government, keep telling them to be patient, but they want everything right away. This is a new country with other important priorities like our health care system, our own refugee problem, our continuing problems with Sudan, and the mental health of the people affected by the war. Many of the citizens of our country have much emotional scarring from a war that traumatized everyone. They should consider themselves fortunate that we want to help them. Many of the people are illiterate, especially the parents of the children, and do not understand our mission as the new government. The President is trying very hard”.</i>
Minister of Education Representative #2	<i>“In our state and village, we keep being promised money to build our schools as the children are missing their right to a free education. Everyone has the right under article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to an education, so do the children of South Sudan. First, the people from the north, the Sudanese government betrayed us and never cared about our education in the South, and now, it sometimes feels that our current government does not care. How can children learn when the schools are made of foliage and the teachers don't get paid, or the children have to sit on the floor with no books, and are often sick?”</i>

Participant	Participant Responses
Parent	<i>“I always pray to God that my children have a better opportunity than me and my wife. I don’t want them to be like us, unable to read and write, and unable to work and support the family. My wife and I never went to school while growing up because the schools were only found in the cities and not in the rest of the country. We get very frustrated because a school may open today, but be closed tomorrow. We don’t know whether to send our children to school every morning. The government doesn’t care about us, they only care about themselves and stealing money from the schools and teachers”.</i>
Student	<i>“It is very hard for me as a girl to go to school because I just find boys at school. My girlfriends are not allowed to go to school because their parents do not believe that a girl should be educated. My father says that schools are for boys only because girls are supposed to get married and have a family. I don’t want to get married soon, I want to be a school teacher because I have had good teachers, when they come to school. I care about my future and my brothers’ and sisters’ future. We have no books, pencils, or computers. If my country does not fix my school, I may leave my country and never come back”.</i>

Conclusions

The results of our small survey lead us to support both Brown’s (2011) and Masungu’s (2012) observations that the current educational system in South Sudan continues to be in crisis mode, and perhaps even more so now that the country is in a civil war. Irrespective of age and role in education, the participants cited continued political strife, mistrust in the government and a chaotic economic system as contributing to the failure of education. Absence of a reliable transportation system also directly impacts the educational system in South Sudan; youth are dependent on transportation to get to school. Other problems voiced by the participants include the absence of school buildings, the lack of basic resources such as books, teaching supplies, and computers. Overall, the needs are considerable for this new nation and are the result of a lack of economic resources in families; corruption and graft among school employees and administrators; the marginalization of female students and teachers; and a denial of basic human rights including the right to a continuous education.

It is interesting to note that there appeared to be significant disagreement between the two education ministers. For example, the first minister seemed more supportive of the government and its leadership, while the second minister appeared to be highly frustrated by the government. Moreover, the latter minister cited the United Nations’ universal declaration of human rights in his response to our question, and the need to deliver an equal education to all of South Sudanese children. The first minister appeared to be more apologetic for the government and tried to blame the country’s other social problems for the lack of attention to education. In fact, this minister also appeared to be condescending toward parents of students by labeling them as illiterate and ill-informed, and by extension, blaming the students and parents.

Of the five responses, perhaps the one most illuminating is from the student who was expressive and genuine in demanding that she should be educated regardless of her gender and

that she would consider abandoning her country if this were not to happen. We recognize her courage for taking this stance in light of longstanding sexism, and for reflecting the feelings of her generation of South Sudanese. Based on our review of the published evidence, events in South Sudan, and the participant responses to our key question, the evidence suggests that it is doubtful South Sudan will have a fully functional educational system by 2020, especially given the onset of a civil war.

The objectives spelled out by both representatives for the ministries of education appear to be achievable, but will require a great infusion of economic, social, and cultural support as well as political stability. At the same time, the country needs to consider the success of other neighboring African countries with regard to education (see Akec, 2012; Cort, Tull, Gweby, Dlamini, Oinkney, Gramby, Cothbertson, Daniels, Huu, & Gwebo, 2009; Epstein & Arntson, 2008; Hovens, 2002; Watkins, 2005). There is also a need to examine the use of modern technology like the internet and long-distance learning as a means of educating both children and adults in South Sudan, especially in outlying rural areas (Cronge, 2011; King, 2006; Rosenberg, Mokwena, & Ntombanzondo, 2010; Sampong, 2008).

In closing, as reported in this research essay, we attempted to listen to the voices of the people of South Sudan, a new country in Africa. This country is undergoing significant growing pains including determining how to best educate its children, who are both literally and figuratively the future of this country. At this time, the survival of South Sudan is highly dependent upon the education of its citizens, young and old. Citizens may flee the country, causing a major “brain-drain” which will have implications for the next several generations (Kuek, 2012a). In authors’ opinion, with no doubt, the absence of an educated citizenry will only place the country at-risk.

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About the Authors

John Chuol Kuek, Ph.D. recently completed his doctorate in psychology. His research has focused on Posttraumatic Stress Disorder in South Sudanese refugees from the past and ongoing civil war. He has recently published *South Sudanese Community Insights: A Cross-Generational Cross-Cultural Rescue Model for Families and Family Counselors*. He was born and raised in what is now South Sudan. He immigrated with his family to the United States when he was 26 years old. He currently works as a mental health counselor in a multicultural community health center that has a large Sudanese and South Sudanese clientele. To date, he is the only psychologist of South Sudanese background in the County of San Diego in California.

Roberto J. Velasquez, Ph.D. is a retired professor of psychology at San Diego State University and currently pursuing a master's degree in criminal justice at California State University, San Bernardino. His research has focused on the measurement of intelligence and dysfunctional behaviors in children, adolescents, and adults across cultures, especially the United States and Latin America. He has also examined the public health, education, and mental health systems in Cuba. He has also worked as a psychologist with persons from throughout the world including refugees from Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. He has consulted with school systems in Cuba, Brazil, and Mexico.

Jeanett Castellanos, Ph.D. is a professor at the University of California, Irvine. She teaches in the Department of Chicana and Chicano Studies. She obtained her doctorate in higher education from Washington State University and has a master's degree in counseling psychology from the same university. Her interests are in higher education and educational social justice.

Diego R. Velasquez is an undergraduate student at Southwestern College in San Diego, California. He has conducted research on the identity development of children from Black and Mexican backgrounds.

Elva Nogales is an undergraduate student at Southwestern College in San Diego, California. She is interested in the education of children in developing countries in Latin America and Africa.