

The Negative Effects of Some Non – Governmental Organizations (NGOs) on EFL Teaching and Learning in Sudan

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Abstract

The current study endeavours to investigate the negative impact created due to the existence of the international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the overall educational system in Sudan. It also attempts to determine how the great advantages and the big gains inspire EFL teachers to prefer working for these organizations rather than working for ministry of education, and how this situation generally influenced teaching and learning English. Under the umbrella of the humanitarian crises missions, Sudan has witnessed a rush of numerous and funded NGOs during the last two decades, particularly at some high conflict zones such as the Blue Nile, South Kordofan and Darfur states. Most of these organizations

adopt English language as a means of communication. They also offer better opportunities to their employees compared to other local institutions including the ministry of education. These gains have motivated many English language professionals including EFL teachers to implement job hunting strategies while attempting to work for these NGOs. In so doing, they are willing and able to work as facilitators, administrators, security officers, secretaries and part-time employees with either long-term or short-term contracts. Among the luckiest ones who successfully managed to get better job opportunities are the EFL teachers. It seems as if working for such internationally recognized and well-paid organizations is better than working for ministry of education for the majority of teachers. Although working for these NGOs creates a good opportunity for the qualified teachers to improve their overall living standard and enables them to provide better life, healthcare system as well as sustainable better education to their families. However, the ministry of education's loss of the qualified teachers has negatively impact the overall education system in the country. Shortages of English teachers have highly been reported during the last decade, particularly at the public sector. The data collection for the current study goes through designing and distributing a questionnaire to a sample of EFL teachers, students, and some interested parties in Al - Fashir area. The data collection process as well as its analysis resulted into the following:

- The existence of the international NGOs in Sudan has motivated the qualified EFL teachers to quit their jobs in ministry of education and work for such organizations.
- Their existence has indirectly and negatively been influencing the education system in Sudan, particularly the process of teaching and learning English language as a school subject.

Keywords: NGOs, High conflict zones, EFL, Negative impact, Ministry of education

1. Introduction

The international humanitarian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have traditionally known as organizations with a very limited role which was not surpass the role of providing humanitarian aid and shelters to people on the outskirts of violent conflicts. For example, Darfur state is not an exceptional case in this regard simply because the region has been bleeding since the outbreak of the ongoing conflicts in 2003. Historically, few humanitarian organizations have been operating in the region to assist the much needy ones during the dry seasons that resulted into drought and starvation throughout 1980th. However, most of the overseas organizations including the hybrid operation of the United Nations and the African union mission known as UNAMID have reached the region on a peacekeeping mission since the outbreak of the current crisis.

In this study the researchers attempt to investigate the negative impact of the existence of these NGOs on teaching and learning English language as school subject in some high conflict zones in Sudan. The researchers endeavour to determine exactly how hiring the most qualified EFL teachers by these NGOs has resulted into decreases of schoolteachers at public schools in the above-mentioned regions. Thus, the study addresses the negative impact of these NGOs on EFL learning processes particularly in Darfur region as well as other high conflict zones areas. Given, numerous organizations have been operating in several peripheral regions during the

last two decades. To name some, the following organizations come along: The United Nations and the African union mission (UNAMID), the International Rescue Committee (IRC), Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), Oxfam, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) as well as many other organizations.

2. Statement of the Problem

It is true that the role of the international NGOs in some remote areas in Sudan is mainly focuses on providing humanitarian supplies to the war victims who have been experiencing the catastrophic situation due to several war outbreaks. No one will contradict that the existence of these international NGOs has created a real employment prospects to the most qualified candidates who are willing and able to state their ideas clearly in English. Due to the excellent working conditions compared to ministry of education, EFL teachers have been motivated and greatly hired by these organizations during the last decade. Therefore, whoever has an opportunity to quit his job at ministry of education and work for such internationally recognized organizations even as a security guard will not feel reluctant to take the right decision at the right time. It is true that the better working conditions provided by these NGOs have resulted into a huge wave of English teachers attempting to work for such organizations. Accordingly, some teachers have even quitted their jobs in the ministry of education so as to join these organizations, and the most qualified ones have succeeded in making their dreams come true. However, the existence of these NGOs has negatively impacted the overall educational system in some high conflict zones in number of ways. First, the majority being hired as facilitators are the well-educated people including the highly qualified English language teachers. Thus, the critical effects on the educational system is evident today in the entire regions of Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan in terms of shortages of teachers at both public schools and local universities. Second, what has worsened the situation is the replacement of the qualified staff members who managed to join these NGOs' with disqualified and newly appointed ones. And that is why some parents as well as businesses owners have been protesting against the poor quality of the English language productive skills and the incapability of language usage in general by many school leavers during the last two decades.

3. Study Questions

1. To what extent the existence of the international NGOs in Sudan has motivated EFL teachers to quit their jobs in ministry of education?
2. How quitting teaching has indirectly and negatively influenced the education system at some high conflict regions?
3. How EFL learning and teaching in particular being influenced?

4. Study Hypotheses

- 1- The existence of the international NGOs in Sudan has motivated EFL teachers to quit their jobs in ministry of education and work for these NGOs.
- 2- Quitting teaching has indirectly and negatively impacted the overall education system.

3- EFL learning and teaching has negatively been influenced by the existence of these NGOs.

5. The Literature Review

Definition of an NGO is somehow seeming harder to pin it down and goes beyond our expectations. What makes the definition harder is the scopes of these nongovernmental organizations which have been committed to multiple and diverse group, with varying objectives, functions and structures. It also seems that their ultimate goals focus on a concrete commitment to improve conditions around the globe. Generally speaking, the literature review shows that an NGO is mostly defined as a private, nonprofit and self-governing organization which is committed to the improvement of the overall human suffering in different sectors. To name some examples of these vital services, we can say that they endeavour to improve the health care system, education, as well as the protection of the environmental system. Furthermore, these NGOs are also pointing their efforts towards different communities in terms of economic development, human rights, and conflict resolution. Politically, it is also found that encouraging the establishment of democratic institutions and civil society is also a very productive domain for some NGOs (Aall,2005: 89).

Moreover, these organizations are found to serve societies in areas where people have been neglected some facilities by official institutions as well as by governments as found by (Aall,2005: 89). To meet the necessary needs in addressing the issues of peace building and conflict resolution around the globe, the role of these NGOs had been significantly increasing during the 1990s. However, the need for the existence of several NGOs in many remote areas in Sudan including Darfur seems extremely vital before 1990s. As described by historians Fage & Tordoff the intervention of the NGOs in these remote areas was essential, particularly when we consider the situation of various natural disasters such as drought and desertification that hit the entire Sahara region during the 1970s and 1980s (Fage & Tordoff, 2000). In addition, the animated need for such NGOs in the region of Darfur was also stated by (WHO, 2004) when briefly reported some causes of massive ecological and demographic shifts that resulted into the converging of the region. For instance, (WHO, 2004) found that the scarcity of land and water has forced pastoral tribes from Chad, Libya and other neighboring states to move towards the more fertile watered land in Darfur. These movements have truly contributed to the massive bloodshed ensued when the landowners (Darfurians) moved to defend their claims and, the newcomers, represented in tribes from Chad and other several states around the region sought to forcefully consolidate their acquisitions. Accordingly, several NGOs have positively responded aiming at protecting human beings through providing shelters and food. They intervened in different levels to establish strong stability ground for the region and also to find out some suggested resolutions to such a complicated conflict.

Concerning the historical background of these NGOs, studies show that their occurrence goes back to a period of time when slave trade was abolished by the British in 1807. Thus, it seems as if the need for addressing the critical slave trade abolishment, has stimulated the formation of a number of organized, non-profit movements to deal with it seriously. It is also found that the presence of NGOs in Africa was associated with the vital need of providing social welfare

services to people who were neglected by the state and it dates back to the pre-colonial era. Thus, in the colonial era, NGOs found their niche in providing social services that the colonial state failed to offer (Michael, 2004). To name some we can say that the ICRC, which became one of the leading humanitarian organizations in conflict areas was found in 1864 followed by the foundation of the American Friends Service Committee in 1917. The well-known organization Save the Children came into being in 1919. Moreover, more NGOs also came into being next, for instance in 1942 we have witnessed the birth of Oxfam.

5.1 The NGOs Involvement in Education System

Regarding education the literature review shows that few of the organizations have been involving in assisting the education system in Sudan. Nonetheless, (Oxfam, 2003; SNR, 1996; Christian World Service, 2004; Interagency Paper, 2002) shows that tribes and IDPs throughout Darfur are becoming increasingly interested in securing at least a basic education for their children. In recognizing this phenomenon, Trocaire concludes that: People everywhere express a burning wish to learn, to broaden their horizons, and to obtain the skills that will help them to improve their lives. Furthermore, in the Nuba Mountains, one of the most forsaken parts of Sudan, local people are slowly beginning to put back together the rudimentary systems of education after years of civil war and isolation (Trocaire, 2005)

Yet, despite the growing interest, access to basic education remains a problem. Oxfam, has supported some 11 schools in Darfur since 1999, and has achieved a greater degree of success in operating mobile schools. Moreover, the organization has established and continues to direct a number of schools in Darfur. The NGO argues that their strategy delivers education in a manner that is accommodating to nomads and IDPs. The literature review also shows that Oxfam underscores the ability of mobile schools to meet the increasing demand and need for education by the people of Darfur, affirming that mobile schools provide a relevant response to this demand. Second, they fit in with community and family activities and movements. And finally, they enable a close relationship to connect between the community and the school allowing children to learn in their home environment as well. (Oxfam, 2003)

6. Research Methodology

The researchers accumulate the required data for the current study via a quantitative data collection method. A questionnaire is conducted and distributed to a sample of EFL teachers and other interested parties in Al – Fashir area, in Darfur region. Additionally, the study subjects also include former teachers who managed to quit their jobs in the ministry of education to look for better job opportunities within the arrival of the international NGOs in the region. The aim of the questionnaire is to gather the necessary data as related to the teachers' attitudes towards the negative impact of these international organizations on the overall educational system in Sudan and more precisely on teaching and learning EFL. Thus, to investigate this study, a questionnaire of almost (15) items is distributed to a sample of teachers who were randomly selected. In order to check the apparent validity of the study questionnaire, and the validation of its statements according to the formulation and explanation, the researchers conducted a pilot test.

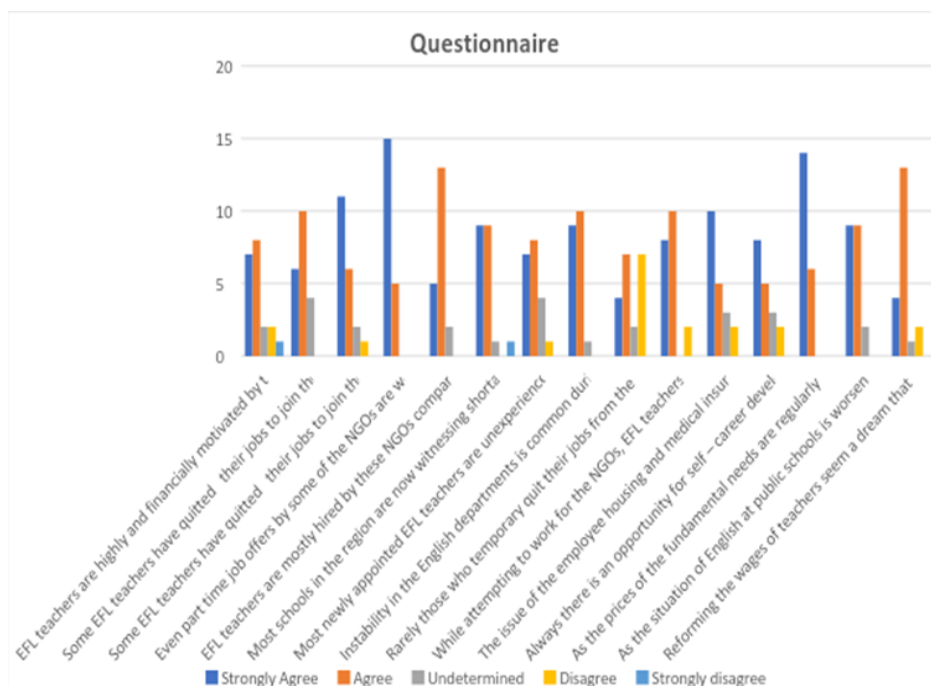


Figure 1. The questionnaire items

7. Summary & Findings

The above Figure illustrates the panelists responses towards the (15) items of the conducted questionnaire. As clearly stated, some items are strongly agreed- upon while others are either strongly disagreed or undecided. In the following tables the researchers will briefly summarise and analyze the entire responses of the study subjects around the total questionnaire items followed by a precise formulation of the conclusions and the necessary recommendations as well.

Table 1. The correlation of the questionnaire items with hypothesis No. 1

1. EFL teachers are highly and financially motivated by the existence of the NGOs in Darfur.
2. Some EFL teachers have quitted their jobs to join these NGOs.
3. Wages rate are extremely unparallel between the ministry of education and these NGOs.
4. Even part time job offers by some of the NGOs are well paid compared to the payments made by the ministry of education.
5. Always there is an opportunity for self-career development while working for these NGOs.
6. The issue of the employee housing and medical insurance payments are highly considered by many NGOs.
7. While attempting to work for the NGOs, EFL teachers are ready to accept any sort of vacancy offers.
8. As the prices of the fundamental needs are regularly increasing, EFL teachers find it difficult to meet the daily living costs in Darfur region.

To sum up this section we can say that the majority of the study subjects showed their viewpoints positively with the first questionnaire item, some proved that the existence of these NGOs in Sudan has been financially motivating the EFL teachers while others are even strongly agreed with the item. Thus, the researchers believe that as the result of this process, many teachers quitted their jobs from ministry of education to work for these NGOs. The fact that they are paid much better compared to ministry of education even when it comes to a part time job is also confirmed by the study subjects. Additionally, what motivated EFL teachers in Sudan to prefer working for these international organizations is the situation of the recent doubling of prices of the fundamental needs, resulting into the fact that many teachers find it difficult to meet the daily living costs. Furthermore, they offer great opportunities of self-career development for their employees which may qualify them to become international staff instead of working as local staff. In terms of housing and medical care, the respondents are either strongly agree or simply agree with the item, and this indicate that beside the issue of wages EFL teachers are extremely interested to have better working conditions where different benefits are considered. And as a result of the huge advantages of working for these NGOs compared to the working conditions in ministry of education, the study subjects also confirmed that they are willing and able to accept any sort of vacancy offers as stated by the last questionnaire item.

Table 2. The correlation of the questionnaire items with hypothesis No. 2

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1. Most schools in the region are now witnessing shortages of the EFL teachers.
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2. Most newly appointed EFL teachers are inexperienced.
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As a result of being financially motivated, some EFL teachers have quitted their jobs from ministry of education. This situation has negatively impacted the entire education system in Sudan, and most precisely at some peripheral regions known as high conflict zones such as Darfur, Blue Nile and South Kordofan states. For instance, most schools are now witnessing shortages of the EFL teachers. To meet the sharp shortages of the EFL teachers, in particular, ministry of education has appointed some inexperienced ones. And as a result, parents are regularly complaining against the poor productive skills and the language outputs of their children particularly at the governmental sector. Tertiary education on the other hand, have also been witnessing these kinds of shortages and it is always the students who are paying the price. For instance, a course that supposed to be taught during the whole semester can be covered in few days adapting a crash course teaching approach. In other words, a university professor based in Khartoum state the capital city does a sabbatical leave to these remote universities in Darfur or Blue Nile and stay for two three days to get the job done before heading back to follow his talented students with good academic record.

Table 3. The correlation of the questionnaire items with hypothesis No. 3

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1. EFL teachers are mostly hired by these NGOs compared to others.

 2. Reforming the wages of teachers seem a dream that has never come true.

 3. Instability in the English departments is common during every academic year.

 4. As the situation of English at public schools is worsening, parents are now forced to take their children to some expensive private schools.

 5. Rarely those who temporary quit their jobs from the ministry of education come back again.
-

The above table illustrates the responses of the study subjects on the last questionnaire items. As clearly stated the majority confirmed the fact that EFL teachers are mostly prefer to be hired by the international NGOs than by the ministry of education. And unless the dream of reforming wages in Sudan comes true, the researchers think that this situation will continue. The study subjects also agreed that teachers who temporary quit their jobs from the ministry of education rarely come back again. This situation then resulted into an overall instability in the English departments and regularly occurring during every academic year in the above-mentioned states. As the situation at public schools is worsening, wealthy parents are forced to take their children to some expensive private schools. Thus, the education access turns into a social class system of education where rich parents have the abilities to provide better education to their children while working class keep their children at the disqualified public schools. Finally, the researchers recommend the following:

8. Recommendations

1. Improving the overall working conditions in general is extremely important in Sudan.
2. We need to adapt policies of making the educational system development mandatory for the international organizations operating in the remote areas in Sudan.
3. Effective and sustainable teacher – training program is required.
4. We need to invest more money to improve the public education sector instead of paying attention to private education only in Sudan.

9. Conclusion

To sum up, the researchers strongly believe that the existence of the international NGOs in Sudan have negatively and indirectly impacted the overall educational system. The ideal working conditions created by these organizations have motivated EFL teachers to quit their jobs from ministry of education and work for these NGOs. Therefore, it is quite evident today that most of peripheral regions are facing shortages of EFL teachers as a direct result of the poor working conditions. Additionally, we also believe that there are many other challenges

regularly contributing to the phenomenon of EFL shortages at some remote regions. However, undoubtedly the employment opportunities arranged by such organizations are the most important factors that motivate teachers to quit their jobs from ministry of education. Finally, the researchers strongly believe that shortages of EFL teachers correlate with the poor production of the English language among the school leavers today.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1.

List of Abbreviations

UNAMID - United Nations and African Union Mission in Darfur

ICRC - International Committee of the Red Cross

IDPs - internally displaced people

IRC - International Rescue Committee

MSF - Médecins Sans Frontières

NGO - Nongovernmental Organization

NPA - Norwegian People's Aid

OLS - Operation Life Sudan

UN - United Nations

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

WHO – World Health Organization

UNICEF - United Nations Children's Fund

WFP - World Food Program

Appendix 2.

No	Questionnaire items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Undetermined	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1.	EFL teachers are highly and financially motivated by the existence of the NGOs in Darfur.					
2.	Some EFL teachers have quitted their jobs to join these NGOs.					
3.	Wages rate are extremely unparallel between the ministry of education and these NGOs.					
4.	Even part time job offers by some of the NGOs are well paid compared to the payments made by the ministry of education.					
5.	EFL teachers are mostly hired by these NGOs compared to others.					
6.	Most schools in the region are now witnessing shortages of the EFL teachers.					
7.	Most newly appointed EFL teachers are inexperienced.					
8.	Instability in the English departments is common during every academic year.					
9.	Rarely those who temporary quit their jobs from the ministry of education come back again.					
10.	While attempting to work for the NGOs, EFL teachers are ready to accept any sort of vacancy					

offers.

11. The issue of the employee housing and medical insurance payments are highly considered by many NGOs.

12. Always there is an opportunity for self – career development while working for these NGOs.

13. As the prices of the fundamental needs are regularly increasing, EFL teachers find it difficult to meet the daily living costs in Darfur region.

14. As the situation of English at public schools is worsening, parents are now forced to take their children to some expensive private schools.

15. Reforming the wages of teachers seem a dream that has never come true.

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