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Increasing the number of universities and current situation of labour market in higher education

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Abstract. In this analysis descriptive research is used, in order to illustrate a clear picture of the current situation of labour marketing in higher education. The main aim of this review is to analyse and evaluate the current situation in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, also known as KRG (Kurdish Regional Government), in terms of higher education marketisation and employment opportunities for Higher education graduates. For this purpose. The influences of globalisation and neo- liberal ideology on the higher education sector were main points of consideration to explore the situation. Findings showed that the Kurdish government strongly follows neo-liberalism ideology in its strategies for Higher Education (H.E.) in order to move forward as a developing country. Consequently, the H.E. sector has experienced a significant expansion, especially through the introduction of private universities. However, the educational system which is in place in Kurdistan remains a work in progress. Whilst HE is considered a main priority of the regional government for developing the local young population and work opportunities are opening through foreign investors, graduate unemployment is high and remains an unsolved issue in the half public, half private university market situation.

Keywords. Higher Education, Marketing, Economic

1. Introduction

In the last decade, foreign investment has flowed into Kurdistan. Consequently, it has been reported to be one of the fastest growing economies on the planet, because the autonomous region possesses over 45 billion barrels of untapped oil and has an open-door policy on foreign investment (Moss, 2013). In 2014 just as an example, over five billion US-dollars were committed to Kurdish inbound investments by foreign investors, including the United Arab Emirates (Pironti, 2014). On the other hand, having a look at this total figure, it draws a picture of currently strong foreign dependency and the pressure on the Kurdish Regional Government to balance local and foreign expectations. In fact, currently, over two thousand five hundred foreign companies are operating alongside nearly eighteen thousand Kurdish companies (Ibid). Further, only in 2013 there were over five hundred ongoing economic and societal projects across three cities in Kurdistan, at a total investment of over twenty- four billion dollars (Zebari, 2013; Moss, 2013). The totality of these investment plans in Kurdistan can be evidence of the potential for a wealthy future for Kurdistan and for the Kurdish people. Further, half of the Kurdish population of five million are under the age of twenty, and thus they constitute the majority of the society and probably most of them need employment opportunities and education service provision. Therefore, in recent years, a vast expansion has been made in

the Kurdish education sector, the higher education sector, the school enrolment reached at a high of ninety percent (Invest Group, 2014). This includes employment opportunities and education service provision (Kambhampati, Uma, 2004). Thus, there are nearly thirty higher education establishments in the region and the goals for expansions are to double this number. This outcome will be realised by a reduction in class numbers by over half, from an average of seventy per class to under thirty (Invest Group, 2014). This aspiration can be seen as an attempt that the Kurdish administration is seeking to address the needs of the younger generation. It also highlights its long-term determination of the development of the Kurdish region through the links of education to the economic success of Iraqi Kurdistan. (Ala'Aldeen, 2009). However, whilst experiencing a vast increase in its economic fortunes and ongoing state building investment, the development of its education sector demonstrates a problematic situation.

According to (Al-Qaysi & Duhan, 2012), it clarifies that the realisations are those which are benefitting from the relatively booming Kurdish economy are not directly benefiting in real terms, as these benefits are being realised by foreign corporations and foreign workers with specialist skills. Therefore, these issues are the main focus on this review and are incorporated into the overall analysis of the local political policies in the economic and education areas. In addition, globalisation of educational marketing will be a central part of this study, and also takes a theoretical perspective towards the liberalisation and neo-liberalism of the education sector. Looking at these areas helps to find that Kurdish higher education policy is increasingly impacted by a global marketisation of education, and currently, this outcome is doing little to benefit the wider Kurdish society in terms of employment or economic advantage.

Amanj (2012) states that the current policies of the Kurdish regional government (KRG) attempt to increase the investment in all sectors, especially in education and the higher education sectors. Further, this outcome gives hope and realise a vast improvement in the division of wealth in Kurdistan and the local sector higher education sector. This will become a main base for educational services (Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, 2010). Moreover, as a part of this ambition, the Kurdish regional government is seeking to develop a vocational educational system, which will provide necessities to the local people with the required skills through education in order that they can compete with foreign investors or to be employed in the businesses of foreign investors. Such a system will increase the opportunities of the local population to take serious steps in the local job markets and facilitate those financial rewards remain in Kurdistan. Moreover, there are divisions system in the private Kurdish higher educational facilities, for example, British and American style. There are British style international schools and these schools are based upon British educational styles, approaches and techniques (BIS 2014; Sawahel, 2009). The British educational system is based on a commitment to democracy, free speech and freedom of association, which are basic liberalist values linked to economic liberalisation (Snook, 1999; Steel, 2013). Apple (2006) and Ball (2008) (cited in Bradbury, 2013, p. 40) acknowledge that the British educational system has been influenced by neo-liberalism ideologies. Generally, it can be seen that this approach includes a set of taught beliefs and morals that are used to build the system which constitutes British society. Basically, it can be realised that Kurdistan is an outcome which is similar to colonisation. In addition, the impact or influence of foreign powers into Kurdistan, and also the economic, political and social outcomes, can be described as a new form of modern colonialism, for example, (Hopkins, 2000, p. 216) acknowledges that "inequality and subordination, and by the integration of a client or satellite state into the more powerful host or "mother" country. Note, however, that integration is always incomplete: an empire remains a multi-ethnic conglomerate: if it assimilates subject peoples fully, it becomes an enlarged nation state", via the cultural,

economic and social developments which have occurred in recent years, it can be argued that this is what is occurring in Kurdistan.

2. The aim of the study

The aim of study is to describe and evaluate how successful the match is between the demand for graduates by the Kurdish labour market, the country's current supply of higher education opportunities and the demand of Kurdish high school graduates. Further, it seeks to evaluate Kurdish governmental policies whether they support or limit development of the progression of higher educational provision in the Kurdistan region. Moreover, this study will take a look at different areas, such as globalisation and liberalisation, and both will be considered in this review.

Additionally, the issues which are relating to regulation and other tools of state control would be considered in this paper with the hope that the government of Kurdistan can regulate their ways towards an improved and efficient higher educational sector, which later acts as force for dynamics in areas such as employment and the provision of quality educational provision.

3. Globalisation

Globalisation has been described as an American-led process of harmonisation of global cultures of modernity (Hurrell, 2013; Lynch, 2013). Moreover, it can be noticed that the term of globalization is highly ambiguous, because there is no single satisfactory universal definition. At the same time, numerous definitions exist and thus, this analysis has chosen a definition which was introduced by Kenna who states globalisation as “a generic term used to describe a range of economic, industrial, social, military and cultural changes which have created high level of interdependence, interaction and integration between different parts of the world, between people and between producers and consumers” (Kenna, 2014, p. 2-3). Moreover, Mosse (2010) argues that globalisation has resulted in the involvement of wealth and capital. Globalisation, like any other phenomenon, has advantages and disadvantages. For this reason, globalisation has been accepted and rejected by some groups of people as beneficial for development of society. The debate on globalisation is between three main groups: hyper-globalisers, skeptics and transformationalists (Antunes, 2008, p. 246). Hyper-globalisation theory has mostly accepted globalisation as beneficial for the development of countries whilst skeptics have rejected globalisation. Based on the hyper-global theory, social and economic processes now function at a mainly global level, and nation-states are no longer decision makers, but decision takers (Kim, 2000, p. 3). However, in the sceptical worldview, globalisation does not bring big changes in contrast to historically grown connections between countries (Parjanadze, 2009) and that rather than bringing countries more together it brought “a greater polarization between the 'developed' and developing countries” On the other hand, most neo-liberals advocate and have optimistic view on globalization. Further, in terms of the Kurdish situation, it can be argued that globalisation is a factor which has been discussed in this analysis and primarily it is considered as a result of the increased inward investment into the Kurdish region by external agencies and companies, for example, “Since 2006, over \$14 billion worth of foreign direct investment has flowed into the Kurdistan Region. In 2012 alone, foreign companies invested around \$5 billion into the economy of Kurdistan” (Savva, 2014, p. 3). The flood of external companies and workers is due to having stability in the security situation, a wealth of natural resources such as oil and natural gas, and the economic boom (Habeeb, 2012; Moss, 2013; Ahmed, 2012, p. 75). Similarly, Hadi (2010) extends that the natural resources and stability are two main factors in Kurdistan which function as magnet economic to attract foreign companies and workers’ attention. As Moss states, “With one of the

fastest growing economies in the world, Iraqi Kurdistan is fast becoming a magnet for foreign investors as it begins a new dawn.” (Moss, 2013, p. 1). Foreign investment is happening from all over the world. Developing countries consequently also bring the capitalist system with them. However, Mustafa (2014) states that the local people are not seeing the direct benefits of wealth. Moreover, Mosse (2010) argues that the capitalist system which has been spread by globalisation incorporates the liberalist ideology and that the inclusion of liberalism helps to breaks down trade barriers which make that the private sector can access areas where resources can beexploited without violation. Based on Mosse’s (2010) point of view, there are not any filter effects forthe spread of wealth. Another area where the core and the context explanation of international relationscan be evidenced is in the interactions between rich and poor states, and this is the case with Kurdish relations towards its partner states.

Kurdistan is increasingly relying upon oil and natural gas exports in order to finance its state building processes, this includes the expansion of higher education sector. Moreover, theories of modernisationsuggest that there is an overlap the utility of an oil economy and public objection refusal. Thus, a sectorof the populace remains at the same level, or near, a level of poverty, or where the aspirations of the wider society are not being met (Armer and Katsillis, 2001). From this outcome, it can be notice that reliance upon oil exports can have a negative effect or low benefit upon the possibility of localised political opposition. Further, it can be highlighted that the modernisation perspective is largely derivedfrom a Western perspective. However, it might be necessary to remember that the combination of processes of globalisation and also the external global trade of Kurdistan is a part of this process and hence helps to create a suitable market at the same time that the processes of liberalism and democratization are occurring. Depending on this point of view, it can be argued that processes of modernisation, or the modernisation effect, may provide an insight into the development of state mechanisms when there is a dependency upon oil (Armer and Katsillis, 2000).

In addition, this perspective, in terms of globalisation, liberalisation and the core or the surroundings would provide a greater insight into the decision-making processes at the heart of the Kurdish regionalgovernment, particularly where the incorporation of private educational systems can be evidenced.

4. Method

In terms of methodology, this review is used Descriptive research method to analysis current situation of higher education sector in order to illustrate mismatch between supply and demand in higher education sector in Iraqi Kurdistan. The reseason of used this method is to explain and describe in-depth explanation of the rate of unemployment and mismatch between supply and demand of graduates in Iraqi Kurdistan.

5. Date Collection

Regarding to the data collection, all data relied on the secondary data from the relevant sources to the research topic. The date was collected from reliable sources in order to present a reliable outcome concerning to the current situation on unemployment graduates in the mentioned area.

6. Results

Two distinct themes emerged from the review. The major themes identified from the results of this paper included:

6.1. *The impact of neoliberalism and globalization on the higher education system*
Neo-Liberalism and globalisation had significant impact on the higher education system in the Kurdistan Region (Palander, 2013).

6.2. *The unemployment rate of university graduates is high.*

Although the number of universities are rising, but the Higher Education System in the Kurdistan Region has failed to find job opportunities for university graduates due to the imbalance between supply and demand.

7. Discussion

Friedman (1962) argued that schooling is not the same as education. Based on Friedman's argument, schooling is a factor that helps to create an organised society and a number of skills, literacy and numeracy skills, are taught, and thus schooling facilitates ways that more people can develop their own educational and intellectual capabilities. Furthermore, based on this point of view, this outcome is considered a precondition for a stable democratic society. It does not provide the needs for creating a good society, but instead it encourages the provision of skills that can allow the wider populace to acquire further skills in order to question those in authority. Friedman named this "the neighborhood effects" (Friedman, 1962, p. 31). Furthermore, the processes of globalisation have resulted in the changing of educational service provision towards a deep-rooted liberalist agenda and the outcome is that the wider society is also being shaped towards a liberalist ideology. Moreover, this is the result of the process of globalisation in Kurdistan where the wider society is involved.

Abdul Khaliq (2008) stated that the current situation in Kurdistan, particularly in relation to graduate unemployment levels, is a result of the Kurdish government's economic policy. The rate of unemployment graduate since 2013 to current has increased by 7 percent which is roughly 52 percent are men (John, 2014). Further, Higher education sector system is not effective. Hence, there are a few job opportunities available for graduates which means job opportunities are limited (UN, 2020). The main issue is that there is an enormous difference in the area of supply and demand (Ala'Aldeen, 2009). Hence, the Kurdish government is seeking to develop and expand its higher education sector more. However, an unsuccessful area which might be necessary to address is the lack of good teaching quality staff or assurance (Ala'Aldeen, 2009). Thus, this could be considered a main issue, whereby this lack blocks the ability of the Kurdish government to develop its autonomous region sufficiently in order to provide numerous other skills, which are current Kurdish needs, for example, engineering, tourism and other sectors (Ibid). However, with the expansion of educational opportunities and universities, it can be seen that there is a clear lack of employment opportunities and "utter poverty" as a result of this. Graduate unemployment is at a considerably high level (Ahmad, 2012a, p. 193), and constantly is increasing for instance, in 2014 the rate of unemployment is 7.4 (Abramzon et al., 2014).

Moreover, this outcome does not go with an effective open-door policy on foreign investment, where migrant workers are taking a great share of skilled jobs. Furthermore, Khalil, (2009) acknowledges that Kurdistan has the major strategic advantage of being a safe country in the Middle East, even though it is surrounded by countries with huge political problems, such as Iraq and Syria. Having large oil fields and natural gas reserves might be the main reason for attracting a number of foreign companies to come to Kurdistan and which are currently operating in the country. This outcome is arguable and can be looked at from two sides; firstly, new business fields have been opened, and the oil research or exploration areas need to be expanded in order to help the Kurdish region to make the best from its investment in this sector; and secondly, the opportunities for foreign workers compared to local workers needs to be reviewed in order to

make an appropriate division of wealth for society. However, this outcome has been influenced by the current lack of places in specialist higher educational courses. As evidence for aforementioned argument, Dler (2013) states that the higher education sector needs serious reform in order to fill and meet the specialist needs that Kurdistan currently has. It shifts or stops the classic system that the country was using twenty years ago.

A further issue is that whilst the higher education sector is trying to improve the country and increase its educational capacity, it has provided greater access to foreign and private universities. This puts Kurdistan in a difficult position since it is trying to create a competitive and attractive higher educational sector, but also it needs to find out the correct strategy in order to meet the policy ambitions. Further, the level of choice in Kurdistan has done little benefit to local people. Lee (2014) reports that the unemployment rate resides at over ten per cent, of which a large cohort is university graduates. In fact, this occurs at a time when the levels of migrant workers in Kurdistan is increasing and the expected increase in local wealth levels are remaining at a poor level (Lee, 2014; World Bank, 2013). However, Kurdistan might not be the only place that has such a problem; there are numerous states that evidence a high graduate unemployment rate (World Bank, 2013). Moreover, these policies are supporting the marketisation of education in Kurdistan. Thus, it might not be suitable for Kurdistan since it reveals a neo-liberalist higher education sector.

The marketisation of higher education and the increasing needs of the Kurdish government and society reveals that there is a mismatch between the developments as a result of following the neo-liberalist agenda in Kurdistan, and the Kurdistan needs, because it shows a number of failings within the people's and economic needs. Thus, it clarifies that the Chinese experience might be a good lesson for Kurdistan. Wang, (2008) states that the Chinese environment provides an opportunity whereby educational practitioners are motivated towards developing an enhanced performance outcome through a series of encouragements, and Chinese state authorities seek to control the situation through central planning. Evidence for this has been provided by research within Tsinghua University in Beijing (Liu, 2009), which explained that continuing control within the higher education sector is being maintained by state authorities. Further, Wang (2010) and Wang (2008) acknowledge that the mixture form of governance has led to a change in the traditional system of governance which occurred in the country, but these changes have proven to be largely insignificant at the operational or policy level, since Chinese authorities have maintained control and have limited or controlled the room of educational planners and higher educational institutions to develop their own systems of curriculum in order to benefit from the assessment side of what constitutes education and teaching. Furthermore, based on Wang's (2008) point of view, this outcome serves only to have impacts upon the increased efficiency of educational provision in meeting the needs of the individual educational establishment, rather than to the detriment of wider economic policies.

Moreover, the Chinese adopted market-led system, or hybridised the educational system. However, as explained, ultimate control is kept by the Chinese state through the usage of a number of theories and approaches that were developed via the processes of neo-liberalism. Chan (2007, p. 535) argues that in this circumstance, a form of capitalism is occurring and it leads the state, which sees an enhanced education system being part of a wider national strategy for economic growth. Therefore, it can be seen that the Chinese system has served to circumvent the liberalisation of the higher education sector in order to advance economically.

In fact, it can be highlighted that the Chinese system has tried to avoid the role of liberalisation in the higher education sector in order to make further economic advances. Furthermore, for the Kurdish higher educational system, which has been influenced by a neo-liberalist ideology, the Chinese model could be a good system as it has produced economic

success in this sector. Additionally, this potential might offer a good result for Kurdistan and thus it will see the state taking control of its future direction whilst avoiding the aforementioned issues relating to colonialism, or whether the foreign corporations and governments give orders to the Kurdish state authorities.

8. Conclusion

This study has provided a comprehensive summary of the current situation of educational policies of the Kurdistan regional government. Moreover, it has revealed that the Kurdistan regional government has failed to realise the needs of local people through education and has also failed to provide improved economic circumstances and employment roles for graduates. Furthermore, a large number of unemployment graduates and a large cohort of the unemployment statistics of Kurdistan can be considered as evidence for the aforementioned argument, migrant workers have been the main beneficiaries of this situation.

It can be seen that the education and higher education sectors in Kurdistan have grown, especially after 2003, and this policy is continuing and the higher education sector in Kurdistan has been permeated by private capital. This outcome realises the marketisation and hybridisation of higher education in the region, but the outcomes for students have not improved in the short term. Further, the marketisation of Kurdish higher education has occurred via factors that have occurred within the limitations of liberalism and the processes of globalisation. Hence, private capital is being used to provide for the state, which previously led educational services. However, it is noted that the Chinese experience might be a good example for Kurdistan, the Kurdish higher education system faces numerous challenges to its future development. However, through an effective controlling policy, it can realise a number of policy aspirations in both education and in wider society. This outcome might be the development of the state building policies of Kurdistan.

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