The Role of Education in the Process of Development in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

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ABSTRACT

Since the collapse of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq in 2003, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq has shown a dramatic change. To some extent, regional and international journalists have brought the change into the international spotlight. As an Autonomous region, Iraqi Kurdistan, which possesses its government, parliament and constitution, is formally recognised in the Iraqi Federal constitution, and the KRG was granted 17% of the Iraqi budget. In a very short time, the region attracted many national and international companies for business and trade. Trade and investment increased rapidly, and the private sectors improved. This, in turn, created various job opportunities. Consequently, the region became a suitable place for foreign skilled professionals. Iraqi Kurdistan did not have the skilled workers to meet or fulfil the requirement that the market needed. This immense economic growth required highly skilled and qualified human capital, which the higher education system of Kurdistan had failed to provide. Therefore, to satisfy the market's needs, the KRG, through the ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, has invested millions of US dollars in higher education to produce human capital. The ministry has adopted the Human Capacity Development Programme (HCDP) that has sent two-three thousands of students to western countries to study at best-known universities. The aim was to satisfy the needs of the region's market and develop the region's production system. This study explores to what extent investment in higher education has led to development. In other words, it investigates to what extent the HCDP programme of human capital, which is achieved through formal training and education, has led to human skills capabilities, growth and mobility in the Kurdistan region.

INTRODUCTION

The socio-economic change in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq under the Kurdistan Regional Government management since the collapse of Saddam Husain's regime in 2003 has been an unprecedented event. The course of economic growth has been the primary source of the stability, well-being and prosperity of the region and the Kurdish nation in Federal Iraq, which has been acknowledged repeatedly by the international and regional statements, professional academics and journalists (Invest in Group, 2014) (Invest in Group, 2013).

The Kurdistan Region situation made KRG incept a new policy that could go with the Kurdistan region's needs. Consequently, in 2010 KRG applied Human Capacity Development Program HCDP to build and develop human resources, among other higher education sources. This program aims at contributing to building a better economy and a better higher education system for the Kurdistan Region. An annual KRG budget of USD100 million is allocated for this plan (MoHESR-KRG, 2010). The program appears to offer thousands of young men and women chances to continue their education in international universities further. Following the Kurdistan Region's needs, many students are provided different types of scholarships every year, allowing them to study for postgraduate (masters' and doctoral) degrees in international universities abroad. To assess the needs for scholarships; subject specialities, The Supreme Board, in consultation with all government agencies, universities, private sector and organisations of civil society, decide the specialities and the subject area necessary for the universities and the job market in Kurdistan Region. (MoHESR-KRG, 2010).

More than ever, the Kurdistan Region is spending a large amount of the national budget on education investment. Developing countries and international organisations also expend much wealth on educational plans. "In the early 1970s, some developing countries such as Chile, Singapore and Algeria were spending almost one-third of their national budgets on education." (Fagerlind & Saha, 1985, p. 3) Furthermore, a scholar such as Theodore Schultz, who won the Noble prize in 1979 in economic sciences, stated that an educated population provides the labour force needed for industrial development and economic growth. More importantly, he looked at education as a productive investment instead of merely as a form of consumption (Fagerlind & Saha, 1985, p. 3). However, many developed countries do not invest such amount of money in the investment of education. Additionally, the academic debates and the policy discussions on the development showed other vital aspects such as economic growth, technology, good governance, etc. Eventually, the discussions and debates are still going on with education's contribution as the process's critical factor.

The study aims to look at the contribution of education in the development process in the Kurdistan Region. The study applies a theoretical framework that consists of the assumption of the human capital theory, development and post-development theories. The study's significance is developing nation-building through investment in higher education and creating human capital.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

What is development?

There are many different definitions of development that each one focuses on the specific aspect such as economic dimensions, cultural dimensions, social dimensions, political dimensions, etc. These definitions shrink the meaning of development into a narrow domain that does not provide an appropriate description. More importantly, the diversity of the development theories makes the concept of development yields different values that each one is different from the others. For instance, Modernity Theories postulate that all societies should follow the American model; Dependency Theories believe that Southern Countries are poor because of exploitation by Northern Countries; Neo-liberalism thinks that the central point is the market and governments should withdraw from direct involvement in economic activities, etc. (Willis, 2005). The diversities of ideology and political economy cause countries to practice different policies. Eventually, this makes modern social theories differ from their ontological viewpoint.

Development Policy in Kurdistan

The Iraqi Kurds and its nationalist movement, particularly the two mainstream parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (1946) and the Patriarch Union of Kurdistan (1975), have emerged, step by step, as a decisive force in regional and international politics since the Iran-Iraq War during the 1980s. The First Gulf War and the defeat of Saddam's regime and its forced withdrawal from Kuwait had enhanced the popular uprising in Southern Iraq and Kurdistan Region. While the Iraqi regime managed to crush the South's uprising, the Kurdish people managed to remove Saddam forces and liberate Kurdistan.

However, after crushing the South's uprising, having realised that the US was fundamentally uninterested in any further against them, Saddam's remobilised its forces and attached Kurdistan. Fearing a massacre like what had happened during the 1988 Anfal campaign, millions of Kurds fled cities and moved towards the Turkish and Iranian borders.

Operation Provide Comfort and Provide Comfort II were military operations initiated by the United States and other Coalition nations of the Gulf War in April 1991 to defend Kurds fleeing their homes in northern Iraq in the aftermath of Saddam's attack. The Coalition's main task was to enter Northern Iraq, clear the Iraqi threat's designated area and establish a safe environment for the Kurd refugees to return to their homes. The mission was both a military one and humanitarian; once security had been established, with the US providing air support and specialist elements with other Coalition members, supply and rebuilding of infrastructure were then initiated. The ground mission within Iraq took 58 days to complete. Operation Provide Comfort/Haven officially ended shortly after, and the 'No Fly Zone' continued to ensure security in the region. Gulf War and deliver humanitarian aid to them.

When in 2003, the US and the UK launched their Second Gulf War against Iraq, which consequently had removed Saddam Hussein from power, the political situation had significantly changed in favour of Kurdish forces. Although the still-divided KDP and PUK administrations exhibited weakness and political problem, the US authority and other Iraqi forces were aware that the Kurds' strength and could not afford to overtly overlook their demands for the sake of the so-called Iraqi Freedom project.

The removal of Saddam's regime had generated a great deal of optimism about the reconstruction of Iraq on a Federal, plural basis and constructive development became the buzzword of political currency in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region. This optimism was the central core of the US and her Allies policy to justify Saddam's attacks and removal. The KRG was a major partner in this project, but the Kurds had their nationalist ambitions, but the internal and external obstacles have increasingly impeded these ambitions.

The major internal obstacle or a setback for the Kurds was the still-divided KDP and PUK administrations, despite efforts from the independent Kurdish intellectuals and even some circles within the KDP PUK to tackle it, remains as it was.

Astoundingly, some European experts who were the Kurds' friends and among them Gareth Stansfield, a well-known and well-connected British policymaker, insist on the dangers of trying to unify the two opposing administrations too quickly (Stansfield, 2003, p. 185). A significant hindrance for Kurdish politics was the US policy directly holding up the KRG as a possible model for greater Iraq. Even Stanfield, who was critical of the two administration's unification, raised his voice against this policy. He precisely warns "that to hold up the KRG as a possible model for greater Iraq "is ultimately foolhardy and dangerous to Iraqis and the Kurds themselves" (Stansfield, 2003, p. 185).

Despite these difficulties and obstacles, the KRG's major players overwhelmed by the euphoria of rebuilding Iraq upon a federal, democratic and plural basis, which would usher in freedom, welfare and prosperity of all its citizens, including the Kurds, approved a radical plan of reforming and developing Higher Education in Kurdistan.

A new vision and a long-term strategy had designed by the MoHESR-KRG were hoped to lead the design of a road map for the reformation of the higher education system. The strategy was implemented in 2009. MoHESR-KRG's reform plan, which was designed in six aspects, instead of seeing reform, development and change in higher education as a process that rooted in the interpretation of Kurdish society's history and cultural tradition, was more an echo of overcoming the social problems as a matter of scientific outlook and rational management. Some of the crucial notions of the program such as 'reforming teaching to ensure quality', 'establishing and developing a TQA system', 'a continuous academic development', 'assessment of teacher's portfolio', 'accreditation and curriculum development' did not stem from the assessment of Kurdish society's history but as a ready-made package. There was no structural base or cultural tradition for implementing the program components such as external assessment, peer-review, critical thinking - which had been integrated into the program.

This insight into educational development fostered a way of conceiving social life as a technical problem, rational decision and management to be entrusted to that group of people—the development professionals—whose specialised knowledge allegedly qualified them for the task.

Although this perception of development was presented as an innovation by the ex-minister and authorities in MoHESR-I, it had a long history in other countries. There were a critical review and rich literature against this insight of societal change and educational development. To be more precise, even in the 1920s and 1930s, much before inspection the discourse of development, as

several intellectuals in various parts of the so-called Third World had examined this notion of change and progress, and M. M. Gandhi is the best known of them.

This account and intellectual tradition sought to devise mechanisms and procedures that mirror the majority population's real needs and open the horizon to make their societies work for the majority's benefit. In short, despite the rich literature and essential experience of others in societal development, including educational development, authorities in MoHESR-KRG, with optimism and a kind of hyper rationality, launched the educational reform program in 2009.

The program's launch with a high level of publicity made many people in KR-I took it for granted and aimed to receive educational reform benefits. Consequently, they were engaging in obtaining a scholarship and going abroad for further studies. This situation has, in turn, created an influx in the number of University students in Kurdistan and abroad, and yet, the educational system has not found it easy to manage this process.

Up to 2014, the plan seemed to work as expected, but by mid-2015, the reform program faced administrative, social and political resistance and restraints from academic staff, even students, which led to slowing down the reform process's attainment advancement.

It was almost transparent that the program faced a major obstacle. Thus, the question was overlaid where to go from that position? The authority in charge of the program and reform strategy has cracked under the pressure of meeting tough decisions and targets planned to achieve. In short, by 2017, it is evident that the plan was faced an impasse.

Realising the impasse, the major players in charge of the plan and their conventional accounts disregard or underplayed the contradictions and shortcomings of the plan and are keen to attribute the impasse to the following factors:

- Unexpected political, economic and social circumstances generated as a result of the ISIS attack.
- Strained relationships between Baghdad and Erbil, and consequently hardship fund and financial crisis.
- The obstacles generated by the mainstream's parties against the plan

Put it into a nutshell; these accounts tend (e.g., Ala'Aldeen, 2009) to centre on the domestic obstacles arena, the account that highlights on ISIS factor, or the one that attributes the failure to the hardship fund and economic decline seems to relegate the external factors (the USA and the UK agenda and their impact) to secondary and marginal importance.

This study aims to provide a critical educational development plan that was designed and implemented by the MoHESR-KRG. It is not our intention to construct an opposition against the strategy of reforming HE in the KRG. However, it is argued that even in the absence of the factors mentioned above, the strategy will still end in the impasse. Thus, instead of finding scapegoats for the failure or unsuccessful implementation of the strategy, we suggest that Reforming HE's strategy in the KR-I is best understood as a discursive formation. For this aim, we are relying on insights and theory post-development of in particular:

- An intrinsic and irreversible relationship between power and knowledge.
- Historically contingent and political specific nature of the changes during the post-Saddam era.

What does it mean to treat the strategy of reforming higher education in Kurdistan as a discursive formation? First, it means merely to understand 'a a discourse' as it refers to bodies of ideas and concepts, or theory, which mediate power through their effects upon the way we act. This means as Abrahamsen puts it brilliantly: "the constitute interdependence of power and knowledge means that discourses should be understood concerning extra-discursive relations, that is, the historically specific social, economic and political conditions of its formation" (Abrahamsen, 2000, p. 26). Second, further, to suggest that the strategy of reforming HE may be best understood as a historically contingent form of knowledge intimately connected to prevailing structures and relations of power at the time of its formation (both internally [KDP and PUK] and externally [the USA and the UK's] authority in Iraq after Saddam). Thus, this study seeks to explore the intimate relations between these two factors. In other words, I argue the post-Saddam era witnessed an extreme optimism of not only building a federal and democratic Iraq but also a viable development discourse of restructuring a new Kurdistan Region, and the ambitious strategy of reforming HE of KR-I should be analysed in this context.

Our approach is twofold. First, it is stressed the interconnectedness of the strategy of development of HE of the KRG and geopolitical and ideological objectives of the US forces, which was fostered and sanctioned the development discourse of rebuilding of Iraq. Second, it is argued the KRG's architects of the strategy overlooked the impasse of the development discourse and took it for granted as a viable route for restructuring the HE in the Kurdistan Region.

The Ambiguity and Difficulties of the Development Discourse
In the absence of any trustworthy theoretical and intellectual insight grounding in Kurdistan, this study aims to explore a path through the impasse that faced the educational reform in Kurdistan by reference to the body of theory variously known as 'post-development, which is a branch of theoretical framework labelled as post-structuralism. Post-structuralism is associated with a vast body of theory by analysts as various as Roland Barthes, Jean Baudrillard, Jean Francois Lyotard, Emmanuel Levinas, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, and Fredric Jameson.

Although post-structuralism is extremely difficult to define, it is possible to point to specific themes or tendencies associated with this type of thinking and are too diffuse to refer to it as a school of thought. Nevertheless, we may suggest this outlook tend to take a critical position regarding the habits of thought associated with modernity, modernisation and development. This is an insight that we rely on in this study.

The Development discourse emerged after WW2, particularly after Harry Truman's inaugural speech, the United States president, which was delivered on January 20, 1949. As Escobar puts it brightly,

> "*The Truman doctrine initiated a new era in the understanding and management of world affairs, particularly those concerning the less economically accomplished countries of the world. The intent was quite ambitious: to bring about the conditions necessary to*

replicate the world over the features that characterised the "advanced" societies of the time—high levels of industrialisation and urbanisation, technicalisation of agriculture, the rapid growth of material production and living standards, and the widespread adoption of modern education and cultural values. Truman's vision, capital, science, and technology were the main ingredients that would make this massive revolution possible. Only in this way could the American dream of peace and abundance be extended to all the planet's peoples." (Escobar,1995, p. 2-3).

During the 1960s, this discourse had dominated the political arena and experts further developed it. Among them, we may mention Walt Whitman Rostow (1916-2003). During this period, it was commonplace to define development as they transition from one situation to the other. This notion conferred upon the processes of accumulation and development a progressive, orderly, and stable character that would culminate, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, in modernisation and 'stages of economic growth.

 By the 1970s, the development discourse was the main metanarrative of economic and social growth in the world, as again Escobar reminds us:

"*Indeed, it seemed impossible to conceptualise social reality in other terms. Wherever one looked, one found the repetitive and omnipresent reality of development: governments designing and implementing ambitious development plans, institutions carrying out development programs in city and countryside alike, experts of all kinds studying underdevelopment and producing theories ad nauseam. The fact that most people's conditions not only did not improve but deteriorated with the passing of time did not seem to bother most experts. The reality, in sum, had been colonised by the development discourse, and those who were dissatisfied with this state of affairs had to struggle for bits and pieces of freedom within it, in the hope that in the process a different reality could be constructed*" (Escobar,1995, p. 5).

What is critically engaging the emphasis of development discourse centred on order and stability during the Cold War by Western experts, as Abrahamsen puts it:

"*…with such a high premium placed on order and stability, the central dilemma became how to achieve economic progress without creating destabilising pressures intrinsic to the modernisation process. The result was some rather bizarre recommendations and viewpoints. Not only did personality traits like 'passivity' and 'defeatism', previously relics of 'traditional' society, become worthy of praise, the most inconspicuous aspects of development were also treated with suspicion. Education, for instance, became a potential danger in the sense that people with higher education were perceived as being more capable of expressing their discontent and organising the masses, and developing countries were therefore advised against expanding educational opportunities without the parallel increase in employment opportunities*" (Abrahamsen, 2000, p. 28).

During the 1970s, the development discourse became a metanarrative of progress and prosperity as Escobar puts it:

"*Even those who opposed the prevailing capitalist strategies were obliged to couch their critique in terms of the need for development, through concepts such as "another development," "participatory development," "socialist development," and the like. In short, one could criticise a given approach and propose modifications or improvements accordingly, but the fact of development itself, and the need for it could not be doubted.*

Development had achieved the status of certainty in the social imaginary" (Escobar, 1995, p. 5).

However, towards the end of the 1980s, a crisis emerged in development theory. Initially, this was referred to as the 'impasse'. Most of the traditional theories used to examine and delineate development were regarded as having fallen into doubt, including the modernisation theory, the various underdevelopment theory forms.

By the late 1980s, leftist strategies of development were at least partially, if not wholly discredited by the collapse of communism, whilst theories that advocated a development path based on the Western capitalist model were also seen as having delivered few if any of the benefits that they had seemed to promise.

Thus, the end of the Cold War in the late 1980s opened the horizon for reformulating the development discourse. This was further enhanced by a previously significant ideological change in Western liberal democracies that was first advanced under new neoliberalism, which gained momentum when Margret Thatcher seized power in the UK. Ronald Regan followed a major ideological change in the US and Helmut Kohl in Germany.

> "*With the arrival of neoliberalism [...] development discourse again took on a more explicitly undemocratic character. The shift to neoliberalism followed the breakdown of the Keynesian consensus in the late 1970s, which saw an increase with the state as a promoter of economic growth and welfare in the West. In the industrialised countries, the retreat from Keynesian demand management was affected by the monetarist economic policies of leaders like Thatcher, Regan and Kohl*" (Abrahamsen, 2000, p. 29).

Under this ideological change in the Western countries, the so-called developing countries receiving financial support from the West had to implement the structural adjustment programs' which was an innovation by the IMF and the WB. As Escobar puts it:

> "*…at issue are the draconian economic reforms introduced in the Third World during the 1980s under pressure from the IMF, particularly monetary and exchange controls, privatisation of public enterprises and government services, reduction of imports, and opening to world markets. The same approach underwrites the strategy of "market-friendly development" hailed by the WB in its 1991 World Development Report as the leading theme for the 1990s. This occurrence symbolises the return of neoliberal orthodoxy in development economics, paralleling the advance of the free market in Eastern Europe. Never mind that as a supposedly temporary casualty of the necessary adjustment people's living standards have fallen to unprecedented levels. 'The essential is to press on with structural reforms," or so the litany goes. People's welfare can be bracketed for a while, even if hundreds of thousands might die. Hail the market'.*" (Escobar, 1995, pp. 57-58).

Structural adjustment was supposed to create economic growth conditions in the Third World by removing obstacles to the free market's efficient operation. Here we stressed the policy that was sought to apply the market-influenced Structural Adjustment Programs forced on Third World Countries by the West, the Washington institutions, the WB and the IMF.

However, by the end of the 1980s (indeed up to the present day), there was (and still is) little evidence that the ubiquitous Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) had stimulated any growth or created conditions conducive to growth. In fact, despite all this forced changed upon the 'Third World' countries "by the late 1980s, it was an inescapable fact that the market's miracle had failed to materialise as predicted. More than a decade of adjustment had yet to produce a single definite success story" (Abrahamsen, 2000, p. 40).

Under these circumstances, it was hardly surprising that many of those involved in development began to feel that the old theories had failed. A notable exception included those practitioners and academics associated with Washington and other aid institutions, which had made a considerable intellectual and financial investment in such strategies as SAPs. The question was where to go from that position. Such was the nature of the impasse. Thus, by the early 1990s, it was commonplace to observe and acknowledge the crisis of development discourse and witness the emergence of post-development discourse.

One of the first examples of this post-development line of thinking was The Development Dictionary, published in 1992. Its editor, Wolfgang Sachs, debunked development in the following terms:

> "*The idea of development stands like a ruin in the intellectual landscape. Delusion and disappointment, failures and crimes have been the steady companions of development and they tell a common story: it did not work. Moreover, the historical conditions which catapulted the idea into prominence have vanished: development has become outdated. But above all, the hopes and desires that made the idea fly, are now exhausted: development has grown obsolete.*" (Sachs, 1992, p. 1).

Then Arturo Escobar used critical techniques associated with Michel Foucault to analyse and dismiss development as a discourse in Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World, published in 1995. The same year saw the reader's publication, edited by Jonathan Crush, Power of Development, which gathered together several articles, e.g., an excerpt from Escobar's book, that took a similar approach to analyse development. M.P. Cowen and R.W. Shenton also used techniques influenced by Foucault to trace the history of development as an idea in Doctrines of Development (1996). Although they took a more nuanced approach of criticising what they see as the harmful and repressive content of the concept of development in the hope of liberating it for a more progressive and emancipatory reading.

Majid Rahnema and Victoria Bawtree edited The Post-Development Reader (1997), in which they gathered a variety of readings that were critical of aspects of development. In his afterword, Rahnema and Bawtree used elements of Foucauldian thought together with aspects of Gandhian and Confucian thinking to argue for the rejection of development.

What is significant is when the KRG and the authority in MoHESR-KRG in 2009 proved the strategy of reform and development it was almost two decades since the west, and in particular, the USA has attempted to rescue the development program in the so-called Third World.

This is why in this study, we thought it is necessary to set into motion the literature review by Arturo Escobar's book as from the outset, he puts:

"The overall approach taken in the book can be described as poststructuralist. More precisely, the approach is discursive, in the sense that it stems from the recognition of the importance of the dynamics of discourse and power to any study of culture […] But there is much more than an analysis of discourse and practice; I also attempt to contribute to the development of a framework for the cultural critique of economics as a foundational structure of modernity, including the formulation of a culture-based political economy. In addition, include a detailed examination of the emergence of peasants, women, and Finally, I incorporate throughout the text accounts of Third World scholars, many of whom tell stories that are less mediated by the needs of the US and European academy. The approach is also anthropological. As Stuart Hall said, "If culture happens to be what seizes your soul, you will have to recognise that you will always be working in an area of displacement." The analysis in this book is cultural in the anthropological sense but also in the sense of cultural studies. It may be situated among current attempts to advance anthropology and cultural studies as critical, intellectual, and political projects" (Escobar, 1995, p. v).

Escobar deconstructs the environment as clients of the development apparatus in the 1970s and 1980s and linked that with neo-colonialist discourse as he continues:

"… the application of which became widespread only during the 1980s, has made possible analyses of this type of "colonisation of reality" which seek to account for this very fact: how certain representations become dominant and shape indelibly the ways in which reality is imagined and acted upon. Foucault's work on the dynamics of discourse and power in the representation of social reality has been instrumental in unveiling the mechanisms by which a certain order of discourse produces permissible modes of being and thinking while disqualifying and even making others impossible. Extensions of Foucault's insights to colonial and postcolonial situations by authors such as Edward Said, V. Y. Mudimbe, Chandra Mohanty, and Homi Bhabha, among others, have opened up new ways of thinking about representations of the Third World. Anthropology's self-critique and renewal during the 1980s have also been important in this regard" (Escobar, 1995, p. 5).

In order to appreciate the notion of colonial insight, Escobar has found Bhabha's definition of colonial discourse is enlightening:

"[Colonial discourse] is an apparatus that turns on the recognition and disavowal of racial/cultural/historical differences. Its predominant strategic function is the creation of a space for a "subject people" through the production of knowledge in terms of which surveillance is exercised and a complex form of pleasure/unpleasant is incited. . . The objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonised as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction […] I am referring to a form of governmentality that in marking out a "subject nation," appropriates, directs and dominates its various spheres of activity." (Escobar, 1995, p. 5)

The contribution of Escobar to the critique of development discourse is crucial as he discloses its function:

"What does it mean to say that development started to function as a discourse, that is, that it created a space in which only certain things could be said and even imagined? If discourse is the process through which social reality comes into being—if it is the articulation of knowledge and power, of the visible and expressible—how can the

development discourse be individualised and related to ongoing technical, political, and economic events? How did development become as the pace for the systematic creation of concepts, theories, and practices?" (Escobar, 1995, p. 39).

This study's approach draws on post-structuralist insights, and as we notice it, Bhabha is formulated his argument in terms of regimes of discourse and representation. Regimes of representation can be analysed as places of encounter where identities are constructed and where violence is originated, symbolised, and managed. To appreciate this insight and its application for HE's strategy in Kurdistan, we have now to turn to Paolo Freire (1921–1997).

Freire, in his text Pedagogy of the Oppressed, 1970, New York: Seabury, launched a ferocious attack on the conventional account of the educational system in liberal democracy and provided an innovative insight and alternative which is immensely valuable to our case study whose forceful articulation of an intrinsic and irreversible relationship between political agenda of the ruling class and education.

> "*To Freire, education could never be neutral; it was always to constitute part of a political agenda. Freire's significance is that his work has provided essential inputs to the theoretical debate on education, but at the same time the practice he has generated is even more important. The protest against the culture of silence is summarised in a critique against the banking methodology, as a conventional custom in school…According to the Banking Model of Education, teachers have all the necessary knowledge and make deposits as to a bank. The students are the depositories that receive and memorise the information given to them passively. As in a bank, information stored in this way can be withdrawn as required at any time. This pedagogy is a reflection of the oppressive society against which Freire reacted at an early stage of life*." (Naman, 2006, p. 98).

Considering the plentiful evidence that a decade of experimenting with the reform and development of higher education in Kurdistan faced an impasse, this study contends that there is also much persuasive analysis in post-development writings. However, this study's point is that we found some of the main contentions of the post-development line of thought insufficient for the needs of educational development in Kurdistan.

Some of the post-development schools call for the end of development, and it is argued that they consider Kurdish political history (you must be a chap). On the Kurds and here refers to it, this is misconceived and precipitated. Having highlighted the shortcomings of the MoHESR-KRG reform and development plan, this study aims to contribute towards a critical insight that raises problems, but it argues that they can be more effectively solved within a pro-development context approach. What then is wrong with post-development thinking? Majid Rahnema and Victoria Bawtree, for example, from the outset deconstructs the myth of development discourse as he puts it:

> "*The disintegration of the colonial empires brought about a strange and incongruous convergence of aspirations. The leaders of the independence movements were eager to transform their devastated countries into modern nation-states, while the 'masses', who had often paid for their victories with their blood, were hoping to liberate themselves from both the old and the new forms of subjugation. As to the former colonial masters, they were seeking a new system of domination, in the hope that it would allow them to*

maintain their presence in the ex-colonies, in order to continue to exploit their natural resources, as well as to use them as markets for their expanding economies or as bases for their geopolitical ambitions. The myth of development emerged as an ideal construct to meet the hopes of the three categories of actors." (Rahnema & Bawtree, 1997, p. ix).

Although this brilliantly deconstructed the myth surrounding the development, if one tries to apply this approach to the Kurds' modern history, it certainly put himself within a trap. In the first instance, it is worth observing that although any thinker would be aware of the geopolitical objectives and ambitions of the US but considering the balance of forces in the region for the Kurds, it is almost impossible to achieve their political ambitions without considering and integrating the US geopolitical ambitions within their emancipation project.

As can be seen, the development discourse of the Kurdish nation-building through investment in higher education in this particular time in the Middle East faces many issues such as the role of context and contingencies: ISIS attack, refugees flee to the KR-I and cutting the budget of the Iraqi regime. Likewise, KRG as the agent of development discourse interrelated with many other agents such as superpowers and regional powers. They all together influence the role that higher education plays in the development discourse.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion can be drawn that development through the investment in higher education in KRI is played by multiple interrelated forces. The neoliberal perspective, as the dominant force, leads to the development discourse. The dominant force is in interactive relations with other dominated forces, which usually commands others to obey. What forms the Kurdish development is this relation between dominant and dominated forces. Through the creation and investment in human capital, utilising the development model borrowed from the West, the Kurdish development policy is implemented. The lack of an independent vernacular Kurdish element in such models made their implementation a severe challenge.

Similarly, given the demographics and geopolitics of Kurdistan, this by itself turned into Achill's heel of the de-facto nation-state of Kurdistan. It was surrounded by states that resent the creation of an independent Kurdish nation sharing borders with them. Hence, the original target of the creation of Kurdish human capital proven intangible, a series of endeavours was embarked on to maintain and sustain social, political and economic independence. As discussed earlier throughout this study, the delimitation in the Kurdish nation's definition was among the earliest challenges of such vision. While the state's notion owes its existence to the "imagined" perception of nationhood, the inclusion of the Kurdish nation was defined to include the inhabitants within KR-I's physical borders. This deemed significant since the experience of building nations through human capital.

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