Neoliberalism, Academic Capitalism and Higher Education in Developing Countries: The Case of Iraqi Kurdistan

Copyright Permissions and Fair Use Statements

Donald Ray Back
Figure 1
Figure 1: Iraq: population in millions by age group


Figure 2: Iraq: total population by major age groups

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Figure 2
Figure 1: Iraq: population in millions by age group


Figure 2: Iraq: total population by major age groups

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Figure 3
As Figure 3 depicts the IKR is located in the northern part of the country and is roughly bordered by the Tigris River to the south, Iran to the east, Turkey to the north and Syria to the west. Three of 18 Iraqi governorates, or provinces, comprise the region: Erbil, in which the regional capital of the same name is located, Duhok and Sulaimania. The IKR is predominantly populated by Kurds, an ethnically distinct group also found as minorities in adjacent countries, including, especially, Turkey (McDowall 2004, 2).

Figure 3: Map of Iraq


The Kurds have looked to the U.S. as a patron and protector for more than 25 years (McDowall 2004, 369). The IKR gained a measure of autonomy from the Iraqi government as a result of the Gulf War (also called the First Gulf War or Persian Gulf War) in the early 1990s.
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Description of item under review for fair use: UNESCO National Education Support Strategy Republic of Iraq 2010-2014 (2011, 14)

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NOTE: I developed this figure based upon data supplied by the Iraqi Kurdistan Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Affairs. It is not from a published work.
The KRG opened seven public four-year universities in the region during this period, while investors created eight private universities.

Al-Hadithi et al., writing on the youth bulge in Iraqi Kurdistan, has warned of “…serious challenges in terms of accommodating the growing generation in schools and universities” (Al-Hadithi et al. 2010, 1101). Palander (2013), in arguing for the need for greater quality control in Kurdish universities, has described the KRG’s acquiescence in 2005 to student protests demanding access to public higher education. Following those demonstrations, the government
Figure 5
purposes, when these were used for college expenses. Further, contributions to college savings funds of up to $500 per year per child could be sheltered in a similar way. Available for families earning up to $150,000 to $160,000 per year (approximately $222,000 to $237,000 in 2015 dollars), these tax relief benefits extended well into the middle class (Slaughter and Rhoades 2004, 43). Median household income in 1997 was $37,005 in 1997 dollars ($55,000 in 2015 dollars) (U.S. Census Bureau 1998).

Figure 5: U.S. college enrollment of all undergraduate students 14 - 34 years old (in thousands, non-institutionalized population)

The new grant and loan programs under the HEA acted as a subsidy to private universities particularly (Geiger and Heller 2011, 8). Jellema has conducted studies on the financial state of U.S. private colleges and universities from 1969-1971 and has reported alarming increases in debt levels at these institutions during that relatively short period (Jellema 1970,
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Figure 6
... increased competition in global markets, a drop in U.S. productivity, a disagreement among U.S. industrial leaders over the nature of R&D funding, the restructuring of defense industries, the rise of an information economy, and the end of the Cold War (Slaughter and Rhoades 2004, 48).

While Reagan-era research policies did not directly target them, as discussed above, universities nevertheless benefitted greatly from strengthened intellectual property protection and the ability to transfer inventions more readily that were enacted during this period (Slaughter and Rhoades 2004, 48). Spurred by Bayh-Dole and subsequent related legislation, university-originated patents increased fourfold between 1974 and 1989 (see Figure 6), and doubled again by 1997. The share of the total number of patents granted to universities or their researchers rose from 1 percent in 1976 to 2.5 percent in 1990 (Mowery et al. 2001, 104).

Figure 6: U.S. research university patents as a percentage of all domestic assignee U.S. patents, 1963-1999

This growth in patents accruing to university researchers notwithstanding, the degree to which Bayh-Dole actually increased income generation activities at higher education institutions
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Figure 7
institutional types was important to help me gauge the independent effects of KMHESR oversight, if any, on academic capitalism activities.

In addition to public universities, I chose representatives from two other institutional types for my sample of interviewees: KMHESR and the American and British foreign ministries. My view was that the effects of KMHESR oversight were likely to be best described by university officials working under the ministry’s supervision and by the responsible administrators themselves. I chose individual officials working in the foreign missions of the U.S. and the U.K. for interviews to gain their perspectives as informed independent observers of public higher education issues in the region. Both nations have been active to some degree in development activities in this sector in Iraqi Kurdistan during the period in which I was interested, 2006 through 2014.

Figure 7: Map of Kurdistan governorates

The map at left shows the three governorates that make up Iraqi Kurdistan. Those universities selected for inclusion in the sample are Salahaddin University in the city of Erbil (Arbil on this map), the University of Sulaimani in Sulaimani (Sulaimaniyya on this map) and the University of Kurdistan-Hawler in Erbil.

Source: Wikimedia Commons\(^{58}\)
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Table 1
in the early 1980s (Reiter 2002, 141). Reiter has argued that Jordanian public universities did not accept most returning Palestinians who applied; these students instead went to Palestinian-owned private universities (Reiter 2002, 143).

Table 1: Enrollments in Jordanian universities and community colleges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Public Universities Undergraduate</th>
<th>Public Universities Graduate</th>
<th>Private Universities</th>
<th>Community Colleges</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989-1990</td>
<td>28,098</td>
<td>3,659</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>37,632</td>
<td>69,389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-1991</td>
<td>31,517</td>
<td>4,292</td>
<td>1,324</td>
<td>40,774</td>
<td>77,907</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991-1992</td>
<td>35,915</td>
<td>4,949</td>
<td>4,072</td>
<td>38,185</td>
<td>83,121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-1994</td>
<td>44,511</td>
<td>4,812</td>
<td>11,319</td>
<td>25,292</td>
<td>85,934</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In 1995, the Jordanian government sought assistance from the World Bank to assess a deteriorating higher education system (World Bank 1996, i). The Bank’s report, a Jordan Higher Education Development Study, found several shortcomings: higher education was not meeting the needs of the labor market; quality of instruction was diminishing as enrollment outpaced physical capacity and research was declining as increased emphasis was necessarily placed on instruction (World Bank 1996, i). The World Bank based its 1998 intervention in Jordan, the Higher Education Development Program, on this study’s findings and reform elements recommended in its 1994 policy paper Higher Education: The Lessons of Experience. Derived by the Bank from analysis of policy changes in other parts of the world, including Asia, Eastern Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, ‘Best practices’ cited in The Lessons of Experience included:

... university autonomy; accountability; quality assurance and accreditation; transparent financing, usually under a finance council; competition for research
Draft 09/01/2009

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Table 2
Table 2: Per credit hour tuition and other fees at public Jordanian universities for the 2008-2009 academic year (in U.S. dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollee Nationalities/Program Type</th>
<th>Jordanian/ Regular</th>
<th>Jordanian/ Parallel</th>
<th>Non-Jordanian/ Parallel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Undergraduate</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Humanities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit-hour fee</td>
<td>14-85</td>
<td>35-85</td>
<td>56-130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other fees - normal course</td>
<td>146-401</td>
<td>318-401</td>
<td>303-537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other fees - summer course</td>
<td>132-401</td>
<td>190-401</td>
<td>303-537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scientific</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit-hour fee</td>
<td>17-113</td>
<td>42-211</td>
<td>85-296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other fees - normal course</td>
<td>154-401</td>
<td>190-401</td>
<td>303-580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other fees - summer course</td>
<td>139-401</td>
<td>368-401</td>
<td>303-555</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graduate-Master's Degree</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Humanities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit-hour fee</td>
<td>113-141</td>
<td>113-141</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other fees - normal course</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>1,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other fees - summer course</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>1,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scientific</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit-hour fee</td>
<td>113-211</td>
<td>113-211</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other fees - normal course</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>1,725-4.925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other fees - summer course</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>1,725-4.925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graduate-Doctoral Degree</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Humanities</strong></td>
<td>113-211</td>
<td>113-211</td>
<td>375-450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit-hour fee</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>1,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other fees - normal course</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>1,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other fees - summer course</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scientific</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit-hour fee</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other fees - normal course</td>
<td>486-2.458</td>
<td>486-2.458</td>
<td>2,175-4.925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other fees - summer course</td>
<td>486-2.458</td>
<td>486-2.458</td>
<td>2,175-4.925</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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university students became eligible for loans with the inauguration of HELB, (Oanda and Chege 2008, 36).

Despite these attempted UIP reforms, the privatization of Kenyan higher education between 1991 and 1999 largely failed. Government subsidies during the course of the initiative failed to keep up with the rising costs of education, particularly in the sciences, as well as of services (Mwiria et al. 2007, 67). Inflation in Kenya was an important factor in the demise of privatization efforts, averaging 22 percent annually between 1991 and 1996, and peaking at 46 percent in 1993. The World Bank indicated in its final report that the financial solvency of universities turned out to be a major issue during the project. The following chart, reproduced from Mwiria (2007), indicates the extent of the accumulated debt of Kenya’s universities during the 1991-1996 period.

Table 3: Cumulative recurrent deficits for all public universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Deficit in KShs.</th>
<th>Deficits in US$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>22,705,554</td>
<td>315,335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>310,858,544</td>
<td>4,317,480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>216,326,145</td>
<td>3,004,530</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>147,715,640</td>
<td>2,051,606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>135,313,271</td>
<td>1,877,963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>503,280,783</td>
<td>6,990,011</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,336,199,937</td>
<td>18,556,925</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Mwiria (2007, 67)

As of 1990-91 the MOE expended 26 percent of its budget on higher education (Wadinga 1997, 33). This share had declined to 12 percent by the end of the UIP in 1999, even as enrollment in public universities was growing at an unprecedented rate (World Bank 1999, ii, Oanda and Chege 2008, 25).
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NOTE: I developed this table personally based upon groups I intended to interview. This table is not from a published work.
I reviewed several studies to determine an appropriate number of interviewees for my sample (Dooley 1998, Natali 2007, Johnson 2009, Silverman and Thomas 2012). According to the literature, the number of interviews undertaken for a study depends on the question being addressed. The prevailing norm is to sample to theoretical saturation, however the definition of ‘theoretical saturation’ is vague (Beitin 2012, 244). Kvale has argued that 5 to 25 respondents is sufficient for “common interview studies” (Kvale 2008, 43). I resolved to conduct up to 18 interviews with individuals in three constituent groups: university officials and faculty members; Kurdistan Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research staff members and experts on higher education in the region from the U.S. and U.K. foreign missions. The planned target interviews are summarized in Table 4, below. The actual interviews conducted appear in Table 7 in chapter 6.

Table 4: Planned interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Targeted Interviewees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Public Universities                                   | - Salahaddin University  
- University of Sulaimani  
- University of Kurdistan-Hawler | Current or recently-serving officials in the following capacities:  
- President  
- Chief Financial Officer  
- Chief Academic Officer  
- Director, International Relations |
| Kurdistan Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research |                    | Current or recently serving officials familiar with public higher education |
| U.S. Department of State British Foreign Service or British Council |                    | Current or recently-serving cultural affairs officers familiar with higher education in the IKR |
Table 5
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Causal conditions</td>
<td>What influences the central phenomenon, events, incidences, happenings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phenomenon</td>
<td>The central idea, event, happening, incident about which a set of actions or interactions are directed at managing or handling or to which the set of actions is related</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategies</td>
<td>For addressing the phenomenon: purposeful, goal-related</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Location of events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervening conditions</td>
<td>Conditions that shape, facilitate or constrain the strategies that take place within a specific context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action/interaction</td>
<td>Strategies devised to manage, handle, carry out, respond to a phenomenon under a set of perceived conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consequences</td>
<td>Outcomes or results of action or interaction that result from the strategies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Reproduced from Gibbs (2007, 87)
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Action/interaction | Strategies devised to manage, handle, carry out, respond to a phenomenon under a set of perceived conditions
---|---
Consequences | Outcomes or results of action or interaction that result from the strategies

Source: Reproduced from Gibbs (2007, 87)

Following is an example of axial coding for evening classes relative to one of my research questions:

Example 3: Axial coding example using hypothetical observations

Research Question 1: If present, how and why have new circuits of knowledge emerged in the public universities examined in the IKR?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial Code</th>
<th>Example instances</th>
<th>Axial codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Knowledge Circuits</td>
<td>Plans for enrollment increase</td>
<td>Growth strategy (strategies)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use of student fees collected</td>
<td>Financial incentives (consequences)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Funds removed from department</td>
<td>Potential mismanagement (intervening conditions)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reasons people take classes</td>
<td>Need for program (context)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Why evening students pay fees</td>
<td>Rationale for fees (causation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Differences from day program</td>
<td>Implementation (action/interaction)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When using this method, the researcher documents the emergent coding hierarchy (Gibbs 2007, 75). I recorded field notes to document the reasons for my decisions during the axial coding process.

I followed these same steps with a re-parsing of data into categories for memo writing—wherein data are thematically reassembled, noting apparent relationships and potential reasons for those connections. I mapped those memos, or primitive typologies and models (Gibbs 2007,
| NOTE: I developed this table personally based upon the characteristics of the participants interviewed. This table is not from a published work. |
to obtain the location where one of the interviewees studied. All of the university interviewees were currently employed at the time of the interviews.

Table 7: Summary table of interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Where Educated</th>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Interview Type</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Haydar, Salahaddin</td>
<td>University Official</td>
<td>Iraq Proper</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>In Person</td>
<td>Currently in posn</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arîman, Sulaimani</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Kurdish Region</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>In Person</td>
<td>Currently in posn</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Çekan, Sulaimani</td>
<td>University Official</td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>In Person</td>
<td>Currently in posn</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behoş, Sulaimani</td>
<td>University Official</td>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>In Person</td>
<td>Currently in posn</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rojen, Sulamania</td>
<td>Academic Admin</td>
<td>Kurdish Region</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Currently in posn</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parêz, KMHESR</td>
<td>Ministry Official</td>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Formerly in posn</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahî, KMHESR</td>
<td>Ministry Official</td>
<td>Kurdish Region</td>
<td>Master</td>
<td>In Person</td>
<td>Currently in posn</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arhat, KMHESR</td>
<td>Ministry Official</td>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>In Person</td>
<td>Currently in posn</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Iraq Proper</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>In Person</td>
<td>Formerly in posn</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Iraq Proper</td>
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<td>Currently in posn</td>
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<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>In Person</td>
<td>Currently in posn</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Academic Admin</td>
<td>Kurdish Region</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Currently in posn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zerdeşt, Salahaddin</td>
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<td>Iraq Proper</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>In Person</td>
<td>Currently in posn</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gazîn, KMHESR</td>
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<td>Kurdish Region</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>In Person</td>
<td>Currently in posn</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rojdar, UKH</td>
<td>University Official</td>
<td>Europe</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Currently in posn</td>
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<td>Diyako, UKH</td>
<td>University Official</td>
<td>U.K.</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Currently in posn</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Narî, Sulaimani</td>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>Kurdish Region</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>In Person</td>
<td>Currently in posn</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Kurdish Region</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>Currently in posn</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bêdad, Salahaddin</td>
<td>University Official</td>
<td>Kurdish Region</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>Currently in posn</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erdem, Sulaimani</td>
<td>University Official</td>
<td>Kurdish Region</td>
<td>Doctorate</td>
<td>In Person</td>
<td>Currently in posn</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy, Foreign Service</td>
<td>Foreign Service</td>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>Master</td>
<td>In Person</td>
<td>Formerly in posn</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I undertook several interviews at the University of Kurdistan Hawler (UKH).

Unfortunately, I did not have sufficient time in the allotted period for the study to conduct the desired number of interviews there. I therefore elected not to use the interviews I did conduct. I do not believe that not completing all of the interviews I had intended affected my findings. I hope that the discussion below will make that apparent.

All but one of my interviewees at the KMHESR and my target universities were male. The male bias was unavoidable, as an overwhelming majority of individuals in positions of authority in IKR universities are men. Without exception, those to whom I was referred at each university were male. The same was true at the KMHESR.