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## MANAGING THE PROCESS OF THE SCHOOL BUILDING DELIVERY IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE WAR IN IRAQ

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### ABSTRACT

Like any post-conflict country, Iraq is facing difficulties when re-building schools. On the one hand these difficulties spring from the political, economic, social and administrative consequences of the prolonged armed conflict. Then in the other hand you have the structure and culture of the Iraqi society and its traditions and values that affect the administration and the decision-making issues. In other words, the problem that Iraq faces in terms of school-rebuilding is twofold.

Firstly, conflict has left the country weakened as far as funds are concerned, politically torn, and economically vulnerable. Secondly, Iraqi culture is a collectivist culture which devotes loyalty to the group, tribe or sector rather than the public interest.

The second problem has its roots in the Iraqi society, and it overshadows any step to be taken in re-building Iraqi society. Therefore, there is a need to establish a strategy of management of the school building delivery that enables Iraqi society to re-build schools in a way to overcome the challenges that have occurred after the conflict has ended and those which have been already present in the Iraqi society and whose impact has become worse after the end of conflict time.

These problems also arise due to the mismanagement of funding, resources and people.

**KEYWORDS:** Mismanagement. Conflict. Economically. Strategy.

### INTRODUCTION

The management of the school building delivery process has been affected by the prolonged armed conflicts that took place in Iraq. This effect has been demonstrated in delay or cancellation of delivering schools which impacts the children's education and safety. Iraq was subject to several wars that have left its infrastructure destroyed and Iraqi people devastated with the absence of peace, safety and police authority. In the post-conflict time when re-building the country starts, priority is given to re-building schools and reforming the educational system. This is because good educational system initiates peace, safety and prosperity in the country. Moreover, education diminishes racism

and conflicts and eliminates the causes for which conflicts take place. Education also helps to spread the culture of accepting others whatever their religion, race and class are; it also provides a safe environment for the children where they are protected from the consequences of the war such as gangs, military militia and abduction. The findings show the management of the school building delivery process has manifested some strengths in post-conflict Iraq such as it reflects Iraqi people's desire and willingness to re-build their country, restore peace and safety to the people, and establish the first step in building democratic Iraq. However, the process has also been found to have some challenges related to the consequences of the prolonged armed conflict such as the absence of law and police and court authority, shortages and lack of funds, the culture that dominates the Iraqi society and police and court authority. This is the culture that dominates the Iraqi society and shapes its future. Therefore, the focus of this study is the management of the school building delivery process in post-conflict Iraq.

**The study Objectives:**

The study aims to evaluate and make recommendations for the management of the school building delivery process in post-conflict Iraq. The evaluation of the process is carried out through identifying the strengths, challenges and recommendations of the management of the school building delivery process. The study adopted a multiple case study as the research strategy. The stakeholders from both the government and the Ministry of Education were responders for the study. The use of a multiple-case study has allowed the researcher to ensure precision and validity. Semi-structured interviews were adopted as a data collection method as it is one of the methods of data collection that yield in-depth description and thorough explanation of the topic under investigation.

Other points that need to be taken into consideration are people's relationships and behaviour, and the hierarchal patterns that overshadow work and the relationships between departments and employees. The findings have also revealed that there is a lack of interaction between department and the government and the Ministry of Education; the matter which is deemed to affect the management of the school building delivery process.

The study contribution to the literature of the management school building delivery process is significant because there is a scarcity in covering this topic in Iraq and in the Arab World in general.

**RESULTS:**

The other study contribution is that the phenomenon of school building delivery has not been discussed in this way which focuses on the stages of management of the school building delivery and the factors that impact this process. The study has also linked the challenges that the management of the school building delivery process is facing in post-conflict Iraq to the political, economic, social and cultural factors that play the greatest role in making this process what it is. The study has made recommendations that are derived from the features of the school building delivery process gaps and complexities. The study has assumed that by changing the environment where schools are built and

delivered, Iraq can extend the change to cover different areas such as hospital building delivery process, for example. These recommendations are based on the assumptions that when a war-torn society starts by making change in education, it can achieve the change in the whole society

**Further Discussions:**

Conflicts in a country do not only affect the physical infrastructure of that country but also the social and economic one (Dee, 2012). Hence, post- conflict reconstruction includes all aspects of life and not only the ‘brick and mortar’ aspects (Stahn, Easterday, & Inverson, 2014). Post-conflict reconstruction aids the transition from war and conflict to peace in the countries that were torn by wars. This post- conflict reconstruction does not only include the physical infrastructure but also the social and economic system of the country (Newton, 2006). Iraq’s urgent need for a post-conflict school building is twofold. Firstly, the new post conflict reconstruction contributes to mitigating the negative effects of the conflict and reactivates development in the country. Secondly, the new post-conflict reconstruction plays an important role in sustaining hope within the conflict-affected people and recreating hope and confidence of a better future (Schwartz, 2010). The area that this thesis sheds light on is school building delivery and the Iraq’s increasing need for a new style of school reconstruction after the conflict has been ended.

There are some reasons which make establishing schools vital in post-conflict Iraq: Education is essential for every country especially for the post-conflict countries because it supports in reconciliation and peace building (Paulson, 2011). Education has been negatively and severely affected in Iraq during the conflict and subsequent wars (Brix, Lust & Woolcock, 2015).

So, it is crucial to rebuild the educational system in a way that meets the needs of students who have been devastated and whose school calendar has been interrupted, and they have been kept by their parents at home for their safety or maybe some of them have been exploited and used for military purposes. In fact, the management of re-building education in the post-conflict period means building the foundations for stability, re-establishing faith in the new state, and changing political and social norms in a way to mitigate the conflict (Green, Lingard & Verger, 2016). Additionally, the governments’ perspectives on learning have become broader and subtler than ‘chalk and talk’ alternative. How learning is defined and perceived and how the students’ roles have been defined as well as the relationship between the school architecture and the students’ achievement and attainment all have changed (Higgins et al., 2005). The implementation of technology in education and the application of learning theories such as constructivism support the idea that establishing learning environment should cope with the tremendous changes that have taken place.

The context of the study is post-conflict Iraq. The landscape is that of a country that has been destroyed and torn by war and conflict. Iraq, like any other post-conflict country, faced challenges in reconstruction. These challenges include corruption, insecurity, weak infrastructure of

communication and transportation, lack of basic services such as water, health and sanitation, and a macroeconomic environment which is unstable (Girod, 2015).

The most affected area by the conflict in any country is education; namely schools. Education is debilitated as schools were destroyed completely or partially and they were used as shelter for the displaced (Karabera et al., 2017). To restore healthy society in these vulnerable post conflict countries there is a need for a reconstruction of schools and the educational system in general ( UN Millennium Project, 2013) which gives people the capacity to survive the negative consequences of the conflict (Francis, 2011) and recognise the root causes that led to the conflict to avoid them (Ranga et al., 2017) as well as to build peace and tolerance in a war-torn society which once adopted violence to solve problems ( Salomon & Cairns, 2011). It is also worth mentioning that what is meant by ‘school building delivery’ is schools in general. The term “school” in this thesis encompasses primary and high schools in post conflict Iraq. This is because all types of schools experience the same process of building delivery, and they were equally negatively affected by the conflict.

Iraq’s dual need for well-built schools the need of Iraq for school rebuilding is twofold. The first one is a need shared by all the countries for physical environment that promotes learning and enhances the children’s achievement. The second need emanates from Iraq being a country that has witnessed wars and civil conflicts, and the need for purposeful management in the rebuilding of schools is required to support peace making and help the conflict-affected generations recover from the negative and destructive consequences of war.

After the war and conflict phase has come to an end, the post-conflict phase starts when the economic, social and physical and politic foundation and infrastructure of the country are re-built (Dupuy & Peters, 2010). Rebuilding does not include physical foundation; it is also rebuilding confidence and peace- making. It is about enabling the devastated generations to resume their pre-conflict life and survive the impact of war. One of the factors that contribute to the healing of the conflict-affected generations of the negative consequences of war is the social and economic reforms such as improving distribution of social goods like education. This also can accelerate the process of peace making (Dupuy & Peters, 2010).

In addition to the effects of wars and conflict such as lack of sanitation, there are other factors that affect education such as unemployment, lack of funding, and lack of infrastructure. Moreover, since education is a source of income and power, any deteriorating in the state of education in the post-conflict time can lead to a more tension and inequalities (O’Donoghue & Clarke, 2013). O’Donoghue & Clarke (2013) identify some advantages of education in the post-conflict time:

- Education can protect children from violence and exploitation as well as harassment since post-conflict times can still be very dangerous

- Education can protect children psychologically by giving them the hope to return to stability and encouraging them to use and develop social skills that help them overcome the trauma of war time
- Education can help the war-affected society restore normalcy and provide social and psychological care that supports in unifying the divided communities, enhancing tolerance and starting the process of peace making
- Education can reopen the door for the development of investment such as the investment of girls' education which can be at the family levels and society levels
- Education can open the door for a change in the economic and social situation of the poor families. One of the ingredients for building democracy are active citizens and strong societies which can be achieved through literacy.

Hence, the starting point of re-building the Iraqi society is through education which can be achieved by school re-building. The present state of education in Iraq as a post-conflict country This part of the literature review discusses the state of school building delivery process in post-conflict Iraq and the circumstances that control this state as well as the challenges that make school-building delivery delayed and even cancelled; the matter which hampers the process of school building.

Iraq between prosperous living standards and lack of food and medicine Iraq is one of the countries that has witnessed turbulent changes in the political, social and economic life due to the wars and internal conflicts where Iraq was a part of them. Among the most-affected-by- war element is education as it is always a reflection of how healthy a country is (Power, 2014).

For example, between 1970s and 1980s Iraqi education system was deemed as the best in the Middle East. Between the 1960s and 1990s a great progress was made in terms of enrolment at all levels of education. By 1980, Iraqi educational system achieved near universal primary enrolment (UNESCO 2003, UNICEF/World Bank, 2003). However, the collapse of the Iraqi educational system started in the 1990s as Iraq was engaged in three main conflicts which included the subject to the international sanctions for a decade ((UNESCO 2003, UNICEF/World Bank, 2003). Six weeks before the Gulf War Iraqis had the highest standards of living in the Middle East, which was manifested in free health care and free education and the level of literacy reached 80 percent (Parenti and Phillips, 2001). University students, both genders, also benefitted from scholarships which enabled them to study at Iraqi universities or abroad. (Parenti and Phillips, 2001). In 1990, sanctions were imposed on Iraq; which led to a more deteriorating in the general aspects of life and, hence, in education and the educational system. Prior to the sanctions, 93% of children in urban areas attended elementary schools.

Nevertheless, sanctions were a turning point which dramatically diminished these figures. During sanctions, less than 75% of children attended schools. Living standards fell as teachers reported that 25-40% of students were absent each day due to hunger/disease. Teachers began to moonlight as taxi

drivers and other 24-hour jobs to supplement their 13 \$3/month salaries (Gottstein, 1998). The features of the educational system were: severe lack of books and pencils, deteriorating buildings and malnourished students, who when attended school, found it difficult to concentrate (Gottstein, 1998). Sanctions enforced on Iraq marked the beginning of an era of underdevelopment and deterioration (Not only living standards and educational system were affected by the subsequent conflicts and the sanctions enforced on Iraq but also the system of school building, which is, in fact, related to both the economic, political and educational systems in the country. 2.3.2. School Building Delivery Process: Past and Present During the 1970s and 1980s the school building process in Iraq took place through stages that were influenced by the hierarchal pattern of authority in Iraq. These stages started in the Ministry of Education where the General Directorates stated their needs for a number of school buildings in a particular area. This statement was directed to the Ministry to be part of their schedule for the next meeting. At another stage the statement was sent to the Ministry of Planning which would assess the proceeding against the national financial budget (UNESCO, 2003; UNICEF/World Bank, 2003). Ministry of Housing and Construction would suggest the design of the new schools which was one of the pre-prepared or typical standard school designs. At this stage, plans, architectural sketches with a Bill of Quantities and the technical specifications would be announced at a later stage (UNESCO, 2003; UNICEF/World Bank, 2003). The 1980s witnessed a dramatic change in the system of school building as the National Centre for Engineering and Architectural consultancy (attached to the Ministry of Housing and Construction) prepared new studies in coordination with the Ministry of Education. These studies aimed at setting standard criteria that would be used while based on the drawing of the sketches and architectural plans. There was a plan to design schools in untraditional way (UNESCO, 2003; UNICEF/World Bank, 2003). In other words, school design was according to ready-prepared models and patterns which were applied to all areas and students without taking into consideration the special needs of every area and of students as well as teachers. The aim of establishing schools in this period of time was to enable the teacher transfer knowledge to the students who were deemed as passive recipients of knowledge. Other issues were not taken into account such as entertainment halls, music halls, places for special-need students, colours, lightening and heating.

UNICEF (2006) has outlined the basic planning and design standards for education buildings: · Structure: the structure of the child-friendly school building should be stable and weather proof. The building should also be comfortable and easily exited in case of emergencies. In should also be in tune with the environment and social and cultural context.

· Administrative offices: Having separate administrative space in the school building maintains the privacy of both the students and the teacher to work at their pace

· Safe water: Safe water should be available and a proper plumbing infrastructure supports the provision of safe water. In the cases where safe water cannot be provided through pipes, a well is recommended in the school compound.

- Hygiene facilities: the facilities for children to wash their hands should be always available. This can be achieved by the provision of soap and water at all times during the school day. · Toilets/latrines: separate toilets or latrines should be available. Cleanliness and privacy as well as safety should be taken into account when designing the toilet facility.
- Light, air, sun, glare, reflection, humidity, noise and odour: Good fresh air circulation is needed in the classroom to avoid heat and humidity. Proper sunlight should also be available, so 20 percent of the classroom floor should be windows. Electricity should always be available to provide light and the energy to operate equipment. Schools should not be exposed to glare or reflection. They should be far from the sources of noise and pollution or odours. If this is the case, measurements should be taken to mitigate the consequences.
- Colours: colours in school should align with the cultural preferences. Colours should also match the function and role of the place. For example, brighter colours can be used for corridors and play areas. Learning places should be light and relaxed in colours, not gloomy or dark.
- Safety provision: Fire prevention and places for evacuation should be part of the school building programme. The construction materials should be free of any hazardous issue to the children. All types of waste should be removed after the school building has finished. Schools, for safety reasons, should not be close to industrial hazard.
- Health provision: Schools should at least have a first aid kit and a person who deals with emergency cases. The proximity to a health centre gives the opportunity to a periodical visit of medical personnel to the school and to take children for treatment and sorting out other problems.
- Library: A space in the child-friendly school should be allocated for reading books and using other resources. This supports the teaching/learning activity. The library area should be accessible but also in a quiet area away from noise.
- Landscaping: The area that surrounds the school is often a neglected area by the government, though it is very essential for learning and behaviour. Trees have a calming effect on human beings and also, they have a positive effect on the environment as they filter sun, dust and noise and they also beautify the environment. UNICEF has also identified some additional functional standards for a child friendly school
- Flexible spaces: there should be spaces between the classes and in the classroom itself. These spaces allow group work and discussion and manual projects.
- School library and resource room: This facility allows the children to enhance learning. It is also linked with the community in the sense that the local residents can visit the library or the resource room and learn about history or handicraft as well as culture.

- Bathrooms: Separate bathrooms for girls and boys should be provided. They should be close to the classrooms for safety.
- Relaxation rooms close to learning areas: At the lower levels of education, children need a place to play by their own or to reflect. Providing rooms which mimic home is very essential because they create a friendly environment for children at early stages of education.
- Individual spaces: Because children learn through different styles, the provision of spaces where children can study or reflect is essential.
- Open spaces: They allow children to exercise physical activities and be in contact with the environment. Open spaces can be designed as playgrounds, decks, orchards, or trellises. The school community can also access these spaces for town or local meetings or any other cultural events.

These recommendations by Unicef (2006) would help in the guidelines of the management of the school building process in Iraq. They would be the building blocks in the foundations of the establishment of schools.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

The studies that have addressed the management of the school building delivery process in post-conflict Iraq with limited and scarce information. This study covers this topic and creates an insight of the stages that make up the management of the school building delivery process and the political, economic, social and cultural factors that play a role in shaping these stages.

- Identifying the challenges and strengths of every stage of the school building delivery process i.e., planning, organising, implementing and legislative
- Identifying the political, economic, social and cultural factors that shape this process
- Identifying how stakeholders made use of lessons from other post-conflict countries and how they understood the uniqueness of the Iraqi situation. Highlighting recommendations for a framework in establishing the management of schools for Iraq which takes into account the Iraqi context and the technological requirements. The framework focuses on the participation of Iraqi community in the school design project and justifies this by the observation other researchers have made that involving the community, students, teachers and other stakeholders results in a more user satisfaction and a better design. The human rights- based approach seems compatible with the Iraqi context as a post-conflict country. The human right- based approach is established on the assumption that a school replicates people from different races, religions and sectors to one place; the matter which may lead to the decentralisation of some groups. This approach addresses different people as one group connected through humanity and deals with them as individuals responsible for the management and development of their schools.



The future management of the building of a society that tolerates differences and variety; which is why the human rights-based approach is an appropriate way to enable Iraq in taking its steps into the journey to democracy.

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