

# **PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM POLICY AND QUALITY OF PUBLIC SERVICES : EVIDENCE FROM IRAQ**

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## **Abstract**

This study aims to examine the impact of public administration reform policy on the quality of public services in Iraq after 2003. The research utilizes a qualitative approach to analyze the experiences and perceptions of government officials and citizens. The findings indicate that despite various efforts to reform the public administration system, the quality of public services remains inadequate, with persistent issues of corruption, lack of accountability, and insufficient resources. The results of this study suggest that the public administration reform policy in Iraq after 2003 has not effectively improved the quality of public services. The implementation of reforms has been hindered by several factors, including political instability, weak institutions, and limited resources. There is a need for further efforts to address these challenges and to enhance the implementation of public administration reform in order to improve the delivery of public services to the citizens of Iraq.

## **Introduction**

Public administration reform is a critical component of improving the quality of public services in any country. The reforms aim to enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability of public administration, leading to better delivery of public services to citizens. In Iraq, the 2003 overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime presented an opportunity for the country to embark on public administration reforms aimed at modernizing its public administration (Bauer & Becker, 2020). One of the key reforms implemented in Iraq after 2003 was the decentralization of decision-making from the central government to local authorities. This aimed to give local communities more control over the provision of public services and make them more responsive to the needs of citizens. Decentralization also aimed to promote accountability and transparency by allowing citizens to hold their local authorities accountable for the quality of public services delivered (UNDP, 2017). Another reform that has had a significant impact on the quality of public services in Iraq is the introduction of performance administration systems. These systems have been used to monitor and evaluate the performance of public officials and the delivery of public services. The data generated by these systems has been used to identify areas where improvements are needed, and to make necessary changes to the way public services are delivered. Moreover, the Iraqi government has made significant investments in infrastructure, such as roads, schools, and hospitals, in order to improve the quality of public services. These investments have helped to provide citizens with access to essential services, such as health care and education, which are critical for their well-being and development. Additionally, the government has also made efforts to improve the capacity of public servants by providing training and professional

development opportunities (Ministry of Planning, 2022). Despite these reforms, challenges remain in terms of improving the quality of public services in Iraq. One of the main challenges is the ongoing conflict and instability in the country, which has made it difficult for the government to fully implement its reform agenda (World Bank, 2021). In addition, corruption and a lack of transparency and accountability in the public sector continue to undermine the quality of public services (Transparency International, 2021). The impact of public administration in Iraq has been significant and multifaceted. Since 2003, the country has undergone a significant transformation in terms of political and economic structures. Public administration has played a crucial role in this process by providing the necessary framework for good governance, transparency, and accountability.

One of the most significant impacts of public administration in Iraq has been the introduction of democratic institutions. The country has moved from a totalitarian dictatorship to a parliamentary democracy, with regular elections and the establishment of a free press. This has allowed citizens to participate in the political process and hold their elected representatives accountable.

Another impact of public administration has been the improvement of public services. The government has invested heavily in infrastructure and social services, such as healthcare, education, and transportation. This has improved the standard of living for millions of Iraqis and has helped to reduce poverty and inequality.

However, the impact of public administration in Iraq has not been entirely positive. The country continues to face significant challenges, including corruption, sectarian violence, and economic instability. Public administration has struggled to address these problems effectively, as the country's political system remains deeply divided and plagued by corruption.

Despite these challenges, public administration has made a significant impact on the development of Iraq. The country has made significant progress toward becoming a more stable, democratic, and prosperous nation. However, much work remains to be done to fully realize the potential of public administration and to create a more just and equitable society for all Iraqis.

Accordingly, the research problem is to determine the policy of reforming public administration and the quality of public services in Iraq after 2003

## **Literature Review**

### **Public Management**

public administration refers to the administration of public affairs and the delivery of public services by the government. It involves the design, implementation, and evaluation of policies, programs, and services aimed at meeting the needs and expectations of the public (Osborne & Gaebler, 2010). Public administration refers to the administration of public sector organizations and the management of public resources. It involves the application of management principles, techniques, and practices to public sector organizations, including government agencies, public corporations, and non-profit organizations. In public management, effective administration and resource management are critical to achieving the goals and objectives of government agencies and public organizations. This requires a systematic approach to decision-making and problem-solving, as well as a focus on transparency, accountability, and ethical behavior. Public managers must also navigate complex political, legal, and social environments, working with elected officials, stakeholders, and the public to address the needs and concerns of their communities (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). The field of public administration continues to evolve and change, as new technologies and approaches to

governance emerge. For example, the rise of e-government and the increasing use of data and analytics in decision-making are transforming the way that public organizations operate.

Overall, public administration is a complex and challenging field, requiring strong leadership, strategic thinking, and the ability to manage multiple competing priorities. Effective public managers are essential to the functioning of democratic societies and the delivery of vital public services to citizens (Kettl, 2015).

### **Public Administration Reform**

Public administration reform refers to changes in the way government agencies operate, aimed at improving efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability. It often involves restructuring, downsizing, and changes to the way services are delivered, as well as the introduction of market-oriented principles and private sector management techniques (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). And Public administration reform refers to the process of improving the efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability of public sector organizations. It encompasses a range of initiatives aimed at modernizing public administration, from improving financial management and procurement systems to streamlining decision-making processes and enhancing citizen engagement. The primary goal of public administration reform is to improve public service delivery and increase the responsiveness of public sector organizations to the needs of citizens. One important aspect of public administration reform is the development of a more effective and efficient system for delivering public services. This can involve a range of initiatives, such as streamlining bureaucratic processes, improving financial management systems, and enhancing the use of technology to improve service delivery. For example, the adoption of e-government initiatives, such as online service portals and mobile

apps, can help to improve the accessibility and convenience of public services for citizens, while also reducing the costs of service delivery (Osborne & Gaebler, 2010). Another important aspect of public administration reform is the development of a more engaged and responsive public sector. This can involve initiatives such as citizen engagement and participation in decision-making processes, and the creation of new channels for communication between the public sector and citizens. For example, the use of social media platforms and other digital tools can help to facilitate two-way communication between public sector organizations and citizens, enabling the public sector to respond more effectively to the needs and concerns of citizens (Kettl, 2015).

Despite the many benefits of public administration reform, it is important to recognize that this process is not without its challenges. For example, the implementation of NPM has been criticized for its focus on efficiency and cost savings, at the expense of broader considerations such as equity and social justice (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). In order to address these challenges, it is important to ensure that public administration reform initiatives are designed and implemented with a clear understanding of the broader social and economic context, and with a commitment to promoting equity and social justice.

### **Public Administration Reform In The 21st Century**

In the 21st century, public administration reform continues to be a critical issue for governments around the world. With the rise of new technologies, the increasing demand for transparency and accountability, and the growing expectations of citizens for effective and efficient public services, the need for public sector organizations to adapt and evolve has never been greater. One important aspect of public administration reform in the 21st century is the integration of technology

and innovation (Kettl, 2015). Digital tools and technologies have the potential to transform the way public services are delivered, enabling organizations to reach new levels of efficiency and effectiveness. For example, the use of data analytics and artificial intelligence can help public sector organizations to make more informed decisions, while the adoption of cloud computing and other digital platforms can help to reduce costs and improve service delivery (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011).

### **Quality Of Public Services**

Public services play a crucial role in maintaining the welfare and well-being of a country's citizens. The quality of these services directly impacts the standard of living for the people and can be a major factor in shaping their perceptions of their government. It is therefore essential that the public services provided are of the highest quality possible (OECD ,2019). Quality of public services can be defined as the degree to which the services provided meet the expectations and needs of the citizens they serve. This includes the timeliness, reliability, accessibility, and effectiveness of the services. The quality of public services can also be influenced by the level of customer satisfaction and the level of resources invested in the services (WHO,2018). The quality of public services has a significant impact on the lives of citizens and can greatly influence their opinions and views of their government. High-quality public services can improve the standard of living for citizens and increase their overall well-being. This can include access to quality healthcare, safe drinking water, reliable transportation, and affordable housing .On the other hand, poor quality public services can lead to dissatisfaction and mistrust of the government and can result in negative consequences for the entire society (ASPA,2019).

## **Factors Affecting the Quality of Public Services**

There are many factors that can influence the quality of public services. Some of the most important include (Tabbaa,2017):

1. Funding and resources : The amount of funding and resources invested in public services can greatly impact their quality. The more resources available, the better the quality of the services can be (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011).
2. Leadership and management - Effective leadership and management can greatly influence the quality of public services. Strong leaders can ensure that resources are used effectively and that employees are motivated to provide high-quality services .
3. Employee training and development - The quality of public services can be greatly influenced by the training and development of employees. A well-trained workforce is better equipped to provide high-quality services to citizens (Morris & Hargreaves,2015).
4. Customer engagement and feedback - Engaging with customers and taking their feedback into account can help to improve the quality of public services. This can help to identify areas for improvement and ensure that services meet the needs and expectations of citizens (OECD ,2019).
5. Technological innovation - The use of technology can greatly improve the quality of public services. This can include the use of digital platforms to provide services and the use of data and analytics to inform decision-making (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011).

## **New Public administration And Quality Of Public Services**



The New Public administration (NPM) approach has been widely adopted in the public sector as a means of improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public services to review the impact of NPM on the quality of public services by examining the relevant literature (Matar,2019). (Pollitt & Bouckaert,2011). The findings suggest that NPM has had a positive impact on the quality of public services by promoting accountability, transparency, and competition. However, the implementation of NPM can also result in negative consequences, such as the fragmentation of services, reduced democratic accountability, and decreased motivation among public servants. Overall, the impact of NPM on the quality of public services is complex and context-specific, and further research is needed to fully understand its effects (Göttle, 2017).

New Public administration makes a citizen-friendly administration from a rigid, hierarchical, disciplined bureaucratic administration that needs to make weak public administration strong and effective. As it shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1. New Public Management

## Public-Private Partnerships And Quality Of Public Services

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) are cooperative arrangements between the public and private sectors aimed at delivering improved quality public services. The impact of PPPs on the quality of public services has been a topic of interest for researchers and policy makers (Matar,2019) and review the existing literature on the impact of PPPs on the quality of public services and provide a critical assessment of the findings (World Bank,2021). The literature suggests that PPPs can have a positive impact on the quality of public services through increased efficiency, better utilization of resources, and improved service delivery. However, the effects of PPPs on the quality of public services can also be negative, particularly in cases where there is limited government oversight, a lack of transparency, or the exploitation of market power by private partners (Chen & You,2017).

And PPP has a significant features in the delivery of quality services to the users as it shown in Figure 2.

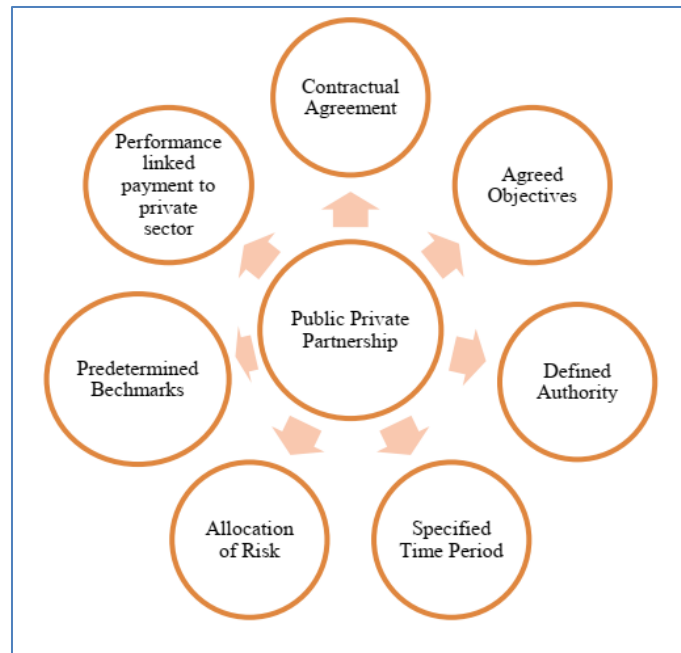


Figure 2. Features of Public-Private Partnerships

Source : Titoria & Mohandas,2019

### Digital Transformation And Quality Of Public Services

The digital transformation of public services has had a significant impact on the quality of services provided to citizens. The integration of digital technologies into government processes has enabled improved efficiency, accessibility, and transparency. The use of digital platforms and tools has facilitated the delivery of services in a faster and more streamlined manner,( De Simone et al., 2020) reducing the administrative burden on both citizens and public servants. Moreover, digitalization has enabled the use of data analytics and artificial intelligence to improve the delivery of services and make it more responsive to citizens' needs (Al-Shawaf,2015). Despite the numerous benefits of digital transformation, there are also challenges that need to be addressed, such as data privacy and cyber security (Matar,2019).

And there is an agenda to improve the public sector in Iraq as it shown in Figure3.



Figure3. Iraq Development Framework

And there is an opportunity for reform linked to the development of oil prices and the development of the gross domestic product in Iraq as it shown in Figure 4.

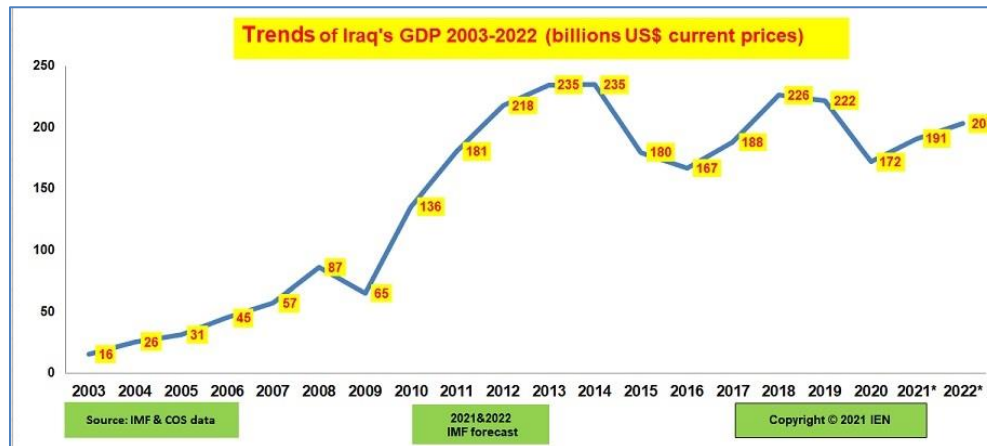


Figure 4. Trends of Iraq’s GDP 2003-2022 Billion US\$

## Discussion and Conclusions

The paper first provides a review of the theoretical and empirical literature on public administration reform and its relationship to quality of public services. This includes an overview of different reform approaches, such as new public management, public-private partnerships, and digital transformation, and their impact on service quality. The paper then discusses the challenges and limitations of measuring the impact of public administration reform on service quality, including the need for adequate data and appropriate indicators.

The reforms implemented in Iraq after 2003 have had a limited positive impact on the quality of public services in the country. However, significant challenges remain, and continued efforts are needed to address these challenges and ensure that the reforms are sustained and have a lasting impact on the delivery of public services in Iraq. The impact of public administration in Iraq has been significant

and far-reaching. While the country continues to face significant challenges, the improvements in governance, public services, and political stability are evidence of the positive impact that public administration has had. As Iraq continues to develop, public administration will play a crucial role in shaping the country's future and in helping to create a better life for its citizens.

One of the key challenges faced by public sector organizations is the need to operate in a constantly changing environment, characterized by shifting demands and expectations of citizens, changes in government policy, and the need to respond to emerging challenges such as globalization and the digital transformation. In this context, public administration reform is seen as a critical tool for modernizing public sector organizations and ensuring that they remain effective and relevant in the face of these challenges. One of the key approaches to public administration reform is the adoption of New Public administration (NPM) principles. NPM is a management philosophy that seeks to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public sector organizations by applying private sector management techniques, such as performance measurement and benchmarking, to the public sector. NPM has been widely adopted by many countries around the world, and has been associated with a number of improvements in public service delivery, including increased efficiency, reduced costs, and improved customer satisfaction.

However, the implementation of NPM has not been without its challenges. Some critics argue that NPM has led to a narrow focus on efficiency and cost savings, at the expense of broader considerations such as equity and social justice. Others have argued that NPM has eroded the public sector's capacity to engage in strategic

planning and policy development, and has reduced the role of public sector organizations in addressing broader social and economic challenges.

Despite these challenges, public administration reform continues to be a critical issue for many countries around the world. As the demands and expectations of citizens evolve, and new challenges emerge, the need for public sector organizations to remain effective and responsive will only continue to grow.

### **Recommendations**

The article offers a set of recommendations as follows:

1. Enhance transparency and accountability: Implement measures to increase transparency in decision-making processes and make public officials accountable for their actions.
2. Streamline processes and procedures: Simplify bureaucratic processes to make them more efficient and accessible to the public.
3. Foster a culture of service: Encourage public servants to prioritize the needs of citizens and provide high-quality services.
4. Promote performance-based management: Implement systems that measure the performance of public officials and agencies and use data to guide decision-making.
5. Strengthen public-private partnerships: Encourage partnerships between the public sector and private businesses to promote economic development and improve services.
6. Embrace technology: Adopt and integrate technology into public administration processes to improve efficiency and service delivery.

7. Promote continuous learning and development: Provide opportunities for public servants to continuously improve their skills and knowledge.
8. Foster collaboration and teamwork: Encourage inter-agency collaboration and teamwork to improve coordination and delivery of services.
9. Promote a diverse and inclusive workforce: Encourage a workplace culture that values diversity and inclusion and attracts a diverse range of talent.
10. Engage with citizens: Regularly engage with citizens to understand their needs and preferences, and use this information to guide decision-making and service delivery.

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