

Challenges of Educational Public Policies and Human Resource Development in Iraq after 2006: Security and Institutional Challenges as a Model

Huda Mahdi Saleh^{1*}, Asraa Alaeddin Nouri²

¹ Department of Political Systems and Public Policy, Faculty of Political Science, Al-Nabrain University, Iraq, huda.mpols24@ced.nabrainuniv.edu.iq, dr.israa@nabrainuniv.edu.iq, <https://orcid.org/0009-0008-3785-4049>

*Corresponding Author: huda.mpols24@ced.nabrainuniv.edu.iq

Citation: Saleh, H. M., & Nouri, A. A. (2025). Challenges of Educational Public Policies and Human Resource Development in Iraq after 2006: Security and Institutional Challenges as a Model, *Journal of Cultural Analysis and Social Change*, 10(4), 2050-2060. <https://doi.org/10.64753/jcasc.v10i4.3140>

Published: December 11, 2025

ABSTRACT

This paper provides an in-depth analysis of the security and institutional challenges facing educational policies in Iraq after 2006, and their direct impact on the structure and outcomes of the educational system. The research focuses on showing how security disruptions, including mass displacement, destruction of infrastructure, and politicisation of curricula, have weakened the educational process and created a sharp gap between stated goals and the reality of implementation. The research addresses institutional challenges from multiple angles, most notably the absence of a clear strategic vision, the decline in teacher competence, weak legislative structures, and the lack of alignment between education and the labour market. It concludes that addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive structural reform based on good educational governance, integrating security and educational planning, and enabling educational institutions to respond effectively to the requirements of sustainable development. The research provides a set of policies and proposals that would rebuild the educational system in line with the goals of the Iraqi state in the post-crisis phase.

Keywords: Public Policy, Education, Higher Education, Security Challenges, Institutional Challenges.

INTRODUCTION

Educational public policies are the main pillar for building modern societies, as they are the framework from which the process of human resource development and the formation of human capital capable of keeping pace with political, economic, and social transformations begins. In Iraq, this role acquired an exceptional dimension after 2006, as the country witnessed deep structural changes, escalating security crises, and political divisions that disrupted many educational reform processes. These changes have led to a significant decline in the quality of education and its outputs and weakened the ability of the education system to achieve its development goals, especially in the absence of coordination between educational institutions and the instability of the institutional and organisational environment.

In this context, this research seeks to shed light on the security and institutional challenges facing educational public policies in Iraq, and to analyse their extended effects on the reality of education and higher education, in terms of the quality of outputs, equity of distribution, and the ability to respond to the requirements of the labour market and sustainable development. The research also attempts to present a set of proposed remedies and policies that can contribute to rebuilding the educational system within a comprehensive vision based on good governance and the integration of roles between educational agencies and state institutions in the post-crisis phase.

The importance of this research stems from the nature of the issues it addresses, which touch the core of the development process in Iraq. It sheds light on one of the most vital and influential sectors, the education sector,

by analysing the security and institutional challenges that hindered its development after 2006. The importance of the research lies in the fact that it does not limit itself to characterisation but rather seeks to provide an in-depth analytical view of the extent to which these challenges affect the outcomes of the educational system and link them to the concepts of human resource development and societal stability. The research also highlights the need for a structural reform of educational policies as the main entry point for rebuilding the Iraqi human being and formulating a national project for sustainable development in the post-conflict phase.

Education is one of the pillars of modern state-building and a key lever for human resource development and societal stability. In Iraq, this sector faced profound challenges after 2006, especially at the security and institutional levels, necessitating a scientific and analytical study to diagnose the reality and propose remedies. This research aims to:

1. Analyse the security and institutional challenges facing educational public policies in Iraq after 2006.
2. Evaluate the impact of these challenges on the quality of educational and higher education outcomes and human resource development.
3. Propose remedies and educational policies based on good governance and integrated with the requirements of national development in the post-crisis phase.

The research question is that there is a clear gap between the stated objectives of the educational policies in Iraq after 2006 and what was actually achieved at the level of educational outcomes, in light of accumulated security and institutional challenges that weakened the effectiveness of the educational system and restricted its ability to fulfil its role in human resource development and building national human capital.

The research starts from the hypothesis that the security and institutional challenges that Iraq faced after 2006 were a fundamental reason for the weakening of educational public policies, and that overcoming these challenges requires an integrated structural reform that rebuilds the educational system on the foundations of good governance and sustainable development.

The research adopted two interrelated approaches: the first is the systemic approach, which helped analyse the components of the Iraqi educational system as an integrated system affected by security and institutional factors, and the second is the descriptive approach, which was used to diagnose the educational reality and monitor the manifestations of imbalances in the educational structure and its outputs after 2006.

The research is divided into two main research topics: the first deals with the security and institutional challenges that faced educational public policies in Iraq after 2006, while the second is devoted to analysing the implications of these challenges on the outcomes of education and higher education, while presenting a reform vision to address them.

Security Challenges for Educational Policies and Human Resources Development in Iraq Security Challenges to Educational Public Policies and Human Resources Development in Iraq.

First Requirement: Reality of Security Challenges

The security challenges that Iraq faced from 2003 until the end of 2017 had profound negative effects on the educational system. Mass displacement and the destruction of educational infrastructure deprived millions of children of their right to education, threatening the future of human development in the country.

The state of security instability that Iraq experienced is considered one of the most significant challenges to public education policies. It disrupted the implementation of educational plans and led to a decline in education quality.

After 2003, Iraq witnessed a severe security deterioration due to the collapse of state institutions following the U.S. invasion, resulting in a security vacuum exploited by armed groups to carry out widespread sectarian violence. During this period, more than 700 primary schools were bombed, 200 schools were burned, and over 3,000 schools were looted. Additionally, many educational institutions were used for military purposes by both U.S. and Iraqi forces.

The security challenges that Iraq faced from 2003 until the end of 2017 had deep negative impacts on the educational system. Mass displacement and the destruction of educational infrastructure deprived millions of children of their right to education, threatening the future of human development in the country. The state of security instability that Iraq experienced is considered one of the most significant challenges to public educational policies in Iraq, as it led to the disruption of educational plans and a decline in the quality of education. After 2003, Iraq witnessed a severe security deterioration due to the collapse of state institutions following the American invasion, which resulted in a security vacuum exploited by armed groups to carry out widespread sectarian violence. During this period, more than 700 primary schools were bombed, 200 schools were burned, and more than 3,000 schools were looted. Many educational institutions were also used for military purposes by American and Iraqi forces.

Table 1: Indicators of security instability in Iraq after 2003

Time period	Indicators of Security Instability
2007–2006	More than 2,000 attacks annually during the height of sectarian conflict
2008–2006	Between 29,000 and 34,000 deaths annually
2017–2014	More than 3.3 million internally displaced
2014 – end of 2017	About 40% of Iraq's territory, including major cities like Mosul and Fallujah
2015–2003	More than 700 schools were destroyed or burned / More than 3,000 looted
2018–2014	At least 135 documented attacks on schools and educational personnel
After 2010	The budgets of the Ministries of Defense and Interior are more than 300% larger than those of the Ministry of Education
2012–2003	More than 500 academics have been assassinated or have left Iraq in fear for their lives
2017–2014	Iraq has been ranked the worst country affected by terrorism for several consecutive years

Source: *Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP). (2017). Global Terrorism Index 2017: Measuring the Impact of Terrorism. [online] Available at: <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/reports>*

The phenomena of migration and forced displacement (as one of the outcomes of weakened security stability) after 2003 became a prominent and new social phenomenon within the structure of Iraqi society. Iraq had not witnessed forced population movements of this scale, extent, and impact for decades. This phenomenon forced millions of Iraqis to leave their original places of residence due to the deterioration of security and economic conditions and the political chaos that followed the change in 2003. This was reflected in an unprecedented rise in migration rates abroad, with estimates indicating that more than two million Iraqi citizens left the country in recent years alone, heading to neighboring countries and European nations in search of safety, stability, and a decent life. This forced migration was accompanied by the involuntary abandonment of property, cities, and villages, and by living in harsh and tragic conditions either in distant exiles or in refugee camps that often lack the necessities of human life (Hegel, Laheeb, 2016, p. 8).

Consequently, Iraq ranked second globally in terms of the number of refugees after Afghanistan and before Sudan—in a clear indication of the scale of the humanitarian disaster caused by successive decades of war and violence. This global ranking is closely linked to the state of security in the country, as the number of Iraqi refugees is directly proportional to the rise in waves of violence, sectarian and religious conflict, and military operations that the country has witnessed. From this perspective, it can be said that migration and displacement in Iraq are not merely incidental outcomes of unrest, but rather manifestations of a comprehensive deterioration in the structure of the state and its institutions, especially in light of the absence of effective policies for development and social and economic stability (Saleh, Ali Aryan, 2018, p. 122).

While internal displacement represents one of the most severe forms of forced migration in Iraq, its features became more evident starting in 2006—the year that witnessed the peak of sectarian conflict, especially after the bombing of the Al-Askari Shrine in Samarra, which served as the spark that ignited a bloody sectarian war resulting in an unprecedented wave of displacement. At that time, the number of internally displaced persons reached approximately 1.2 million, and by the end of the same year, the number had risen to 2.7 million. This placed enormous pressure on the infrastructure of host cities, particularly Baghdad, which was the most affected due to being the epicenter of the conflict and the focal point of population and political tensions. Many neighborhoods in the capital witnessed mass displacement operations that directly impacted the social fabric and led to the formation of a new demographic map in the affected areas (Group of Researchers, 2016, p. 38).

The waves of displacement continued in the following years but took a dangerously escalating turn after the events of 2014, when the city of Mosul fell into the hands of the terrorist organization ISIS. Iraq then entered the largest wave of internal displacement in its modern history. According to Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) data, the number of displaced families between January 2014 and the end of September 2015 reached approximately 534,456 families — equivalent to 3,206,736 individuals — a number that reflects the scale of the tragedy civilians experienced under terrorist threats and the massive collapse of security. According to data from the Ministry of Migration and Displacement, the number of displaced persons peaked at the end of 2017, reaching

around 5.9 million. Most of these were displaced from eight main Iraqi governorates, with Nineveh leading at 57%, followed by Anbar and Salah al-Din. This confirms that the displacement was not random but systematic, geographically linked to the map of terrorist expansion. (Saleh, Ali Aryan, 2018, p. 123).

Migration and displacement have had complex and multifaceted impacts on the educational process in Iraq. They directly affected academic achievement rates, educational infrastructure, and school enrollment and retention rates — particularly in conflict-affected areas. A report by UNESCO showed that forced displacement disrupts traditional education systems and imposes logistical and administrative challenges on the ministries of education in responding quickly to the needs of displaced children. It was confirmed that around 600,000 displaced children in Iraq lost an entire academic year after 2014, and that more than 3 million school-aged children were out of the formal education system due to displacement, the destruction of schools, or the lack of educational services in the areas where they were located. (Lafta, Firas Kazem Hassouni, 2024, p.96).

Moreover, the absence of a stable educational environment prompted some families to resort to what is known as "family education" — that is, children being taught by parents or a family member to make up for the lack of schooling. This is an unregulated mechanism that does not guarantee the same standards as institutional education. The 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report by UNESCO indicated that displacement leads to the emergence of seasonal or irregular educational patterns, fundamentally threatening sustainable investment in education. These phenomena affect both displaced students and host communities, as migration empties rural areas of their populations, causes overcrowding in urban areas, and increases pressure on educational institutions.

On a psychological level, some studies have shown that displaced children suffer from behavioral disorders and psychological trauma that negatively impact their ability to learn (UNESCO, 2019, p. 11).

On another front, external migration — particularly the migration of scientific professionals and educational staff — is an additional factor contributing to the deterioration of the educational system. This phenomenon has led to a brain drain, deepening the crisis of intellectual migration, the effects of which persist to this day. It calls for a strategic intervention to rebuild education as a key sector within broader efforts of reconstruction and human development (Saleh, Ali Aryan, 2018, p. 123).

Table (2): Rates of Internal Displacement and External Migration by Iraqi Governorates (2014-2017)

Governorate	Displacement rate of the governorate's total population	Number of internally displaced persons	Estimates of out-migration: High
Nineveh	72%	2,661,346	High
Anbar	86%	1,503,458	Medium
Salah al-Din	47%	746,922	Medium
Diyala	22%	358,583	Medium
Kirkuk	14%	220,352	High
Baghdad	2%	157,547	Low
Babylon	2%	46,563	Estimates of out-migration: High

Source: International Organisation for Migration in Iraq, *Overview of Displacement in Iraq Displacement Tracking Matrix Integrated On-Site Assessment V 2020, Baghdad, 2021, pp. 1-11.*

Second Requirement: Implications of security challenges on educational outcomes in the education and higher education sectors in Iraq

Analysing the implications of these transformations on educational outcomes in the education and higher education sectors is not limited to the quantitative dimension (number of schools, number of universities, or enrolment rates), but goes beyond it to deeper levels related to the quality of the educational process, educational justice, equal opportunities, and building human capital:

1. The widening education gap between stable areas and conflict-affected regions:

Mass displacement led to the concentration of displaced students in certain provinces without prior planning, creating a sharp imbalance in the distribution of educational resources. While some provinces were left nearly empty of students, schools in cities like Karbala, Erbil, and Basra became overcrowded beyond their capacity. This disparity resulted in weaker academic outcomes for displaced students due to a lack of follow-up, shortages of teachers, inconsistencies in curricula, and weak administrative and educational oversight (Al-Haidari, Ibrahim, 2019, p. 109).

2. Erosion of educational standards and decline in transferable skills:

The quality of education outcomes declined due to frequent disruptions in attendance, curriculum instability, and lack of continuous teacher training. This produced graduate lacking basic skills in language, numeracy, and critical thinking. Reports from the World Bank revealed a clear deterioration in learning

assessment results, particularly in displacement-affected areas, where education gaps showed that children were behind by two academic years compared to their peers in more stable regions.

3. Increase in learning loss and decline in enrollment and completion rates:

Some regions, such as Nineveh and Anbar, recorded high dropout rates exceeding 40% in certain age groups. This was due to limited access to schools, lack of a sense of security, and the necessity of working to support family income. These factors contributed to depriving an entire generation of children of basic education, leading to a buildup of chronic illiteracy and a long-term decline in opportunities for community development.

4. Distortion in the academic specialization map due to the widespread migration of skilled professionals:

Large numbers of educational staff left Iraq or relocated to safer internal areas, leading to significant imbalances in the availability of academic specializations—particularly in scientific, medical, and engineering fields. As a result, higher education institutions relied on substitute staff, who were sometimes unqualified, which negatively affected the quality of graduates in these fields and weakened their competitiveness in the local and regional labor markets (Raheema, Nagham Saadoun, p. 237).

5. Decline in civic values and national cohesion within educational content:

Security conditions contributed to reinforcing identity-based and sectarian divisions, which was reflected in the content of some curricula that began to exhibit cultural fragmentation and a decline in unifying concepts such as pluralism and tolerance. In this context, complaints were recorded about the use of certain schools and curricula to reinforce division or omit inclusive national narratives, which further weakens national belonging and impacts the value-building process among students.

6. Underinvestment in education as a component of reconstruction:

Due to security and military priorities after 2014, the education sector was marginalized in state budgets, receiving only a small portion of GDP (less than 4%). This led to delays in school rehabilitation projects, curriculum development, and teacher training. Consequently, thousands of schools remained destroyed or unfit for use, and the disparity between public and private education worsened, with quality education becoming accessible only to those who could afford it (Yaqoub, Sahar Jabbar, 2021).

7. Long-term psychological and educational impacts on displaced students:

Displaced children suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), attention and concentration difficulties, which reduce their ability to learn and increase the likelihood of early dropout. Moreover, the lack of psychological and social support in schools—except for some isolated international NGO projects—has left schools ill-equipped to provide comprehensive care for these students (Raheema, Nagham Saadoun, pp. 237–239).

Institutional Challenges to Educational Policies and Human Resource Development

The school curricula, being one of the most critical and influential educational pathways, must assume a new role shaped by Iraq's evolving historical phases from tyranny to the current democratic development (Ubaid, Shaima Hussein, p. 108).

The teacher also plays a vital role in shaping and developing individuals. Their responsibility extends beyond merely transmitting knowledge and information to younger generations; it includes preparing, educating, and cultivating students holistically—intellectually, morally, socially, and politically. Teachers are tasked with instilling religious, ethical, and social values, fostering cultural and historical identity, and serving as role models and reformers. It is their responsibility to prepare a new generation capable of contributing to the nation's future development (Al-Mazrou, Abdulwahid bin Hamad, and Mohammed, Maher Ahmad Hassan, 2015, p. 170).

Over the past three decades, Iraq has witnessed the emigration of its most competent scientific and technical minds across various disciplines. This phenomenon has posed a serious challenge to the educational and intellectual foundation of the country, which has become depleted of scientific expertise and talent. The situation became even more dire after the fall of the former regime, which left behind chaos, destruction, and a collapse of both the country's infrastructure and institutions (Al-Haidari, Ibrahim, 2019, p. 71).

Since 2003, Iraq's education system has struggled to keep pace with global developments. The literacy rate dropped to 55% for males and 23% for females. Iraq has around 15,500 schools nationwide, many of which are in need of renovation. Following ISIS's occupation of the western regions, the number of schools requiring repair increased significantly, as 7,600 schools were destroyed by war. This has been compounded by a shortage of science labs, deteriorating school health facilities, and an almost total absence of school libraries (Rahu, Ghazi Ibrahim).

There is also a severe shortage of textbooks and educational materials, combined with low teacher morale due to inadequate salaries, poor school conditions, and overcrowded classrooms (Rahu, Ghazi Ibrahim).

The reality of the educational process warns of serious collapses whose effects on the social and cultural life of the country in the future cannot be predicted. This is because the current state of education does not provide

even the simplest conditions and requirements necessary for the educational process, due to the lack of scientific resources, weakness of teaching staff, insufficient teaching materials, deterioration of buildings and services, and the doubling number of students. In addition, the poor security, political, and economic situations, along with the impact of political chaos, partisan divisions, and sectarian quotas, have all contributed to a significant decline in the level of education (Hamza, Karim Mohammed, 2011, p. 9).

The education system has become a victim of looting, plundering, and destruction as if it were part of the battlefield itself. What we see today is the cumulative result of years of problems that have become intertwined with structural and cultural issues within the education system, including disparities in fulfilling educational needs between males and females, between rural and urban populations, and the reality that quantitative growth in the number of students and teachers has not been accompanied by a corresponding improvement in the quality or efficiency of education. Despite this, compulsory education remains law but requires proper enforcement (Al-Hariri, Jasim Younis, 2018, p. 108).

A phenomenon has emerged in the educational system, which is the spread of private schools (primary and secondary), and this has become a subject of debate between supporters and opponents. Some see it as a profit-driven project, while others view it as a step that serves education and fosters competition among students. The deteriorating state of public education has driven many Iraqi families to turn to private education out of fear for their children's future, due to the inability to build quality educational capacities within public education. This, without a doubt, is another problem (Al-Hariri, Jasim Younis, 2018, p. 109).

From the above, we can understand that the nature of the educational process in Iraq after 2003 has suffered from many issues and obstacles, including political, social, economic, security and others (Alwan, Ali Mohammed, 2020).

Organisational Challenges

First: Defining the Vision of The Goal of the Educational System:

Although Iraq has a clear and ambitious goal for the educational process—one that may exceed the available resources it possesses—this creates a challenge or problem in the inability to implement educational policies derived from those goals. Many educational institutions are unable to translate these goals into positive realities and outcomes. The educational system has gone through several phases that led to its decline, including the economic sanctions in the 1990s, the political regime changes after 2003, the war against ISIS in 2014, and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. All these stages reduced the effectiveness of educational institutions in achieving the predetermined objectives. Thus, the flaw was not so much in the nature of the goals but rather in the implementation process, which suffered from a lack of resources and available allocations (Zeboun, Amal Asmar, and Abd, Muliha Jabbar, 2022, p. 337).

Education and upbringing are arenas of competition between individuals and groups and serve to highlight their relative differences. The fundamental pillar of education lies in providing all the knowledge, skills, and experiences individuals need to be more effective in their society. This is the minimum goal of the educational system and what the government, society, or educational institutions should aim to achieve. Education should be a right for all individuals, and government institutions must work together to secure the basic needs for education and upbringing. However, achieving these goals entirely may not be possible. Below, we will present the most important of these goals (Nassar, Sami Mohammed, et al., 2020, pp. 261–262).

1. Securing the essential requirements for education, including infrastructure and curricula, but these necessities can only be achieved through financial allocations and political will aimed at developing education.
2. It is the state's responsibility to provide the basic needs of the educational system, meaning benefiting from educational opportunities and providing a successful scientific and educational environment; however, this goal may not be realized due to the difficult circumstances Iraq is experiencing.
3. Ensuring the right to education for all without discrimination; this goal has clashed with the current reality where private schools with high fees have created class barriers within the educational system, resulting in inequality in access to learning.
4. One of the goals of the educational system is to provide knowledge, acquire skills, foster correct thinking values, and offer a cultural environment by promoting artistic and intellectual creativity, attracting talents—this can only be achieved by establishing forums and institutes for gifted individuals under the supervision of state institutions that support this aspect.
5. The participation of all sectors and state institutions, whether governmental or private, in mobilizing human and material resources to support the educational system; this goal is difficult to achieve because many state institutions suffer from problems that negatively affect their functioning and the services they provide to the educational system (Al-Mashaa, Mahmoud Mohammed, 2012, pp. 24–25).

Secondly: Absorptive Capacity of Educational Institutions

Students are one of the most important inputs of the educational system and the educational process. The goal of education is to provide students with knowledge, skills, and experiences and to apply science correctly and effectively, regardless of the type of education, whether as consumption or investment. Students are considered human capital, and the quality of education they receive, and their scientific competence become productivity Yasser, (Hadeel Latif, 2024).

The preparation of graduate students is linked to the ability of educational institutions to absorb these students and to the actual demand for education from an investment and consumption perspective—that is, the actual need for human capital. The inability of educational institutions to absorb the number of qualified students is a fundamental problem. However, some institutions may absorb more students than the actual labor market needs, leading to an oversupply of graduates without corresponding job opportunities. This creates a form of unemployment among graduates and negatively affects both the graduates and their families, which in turn harms society.

When discussing the problem of educational institutions' capacities and infrastructure—many of which suffer from numerous issues and cannot fulfill their commitments to learners or those seeking knowledge—we may find institutions with inflated human capital at the expense of the Iraqi economy and labor market. This has led some professional syndicates to refuse to recognize newly established colleges, especially scientific colleges such as dentistry and pharmacy, due to the excess number of graduates relative to available employment opportunities.

It should be noted that Iraq suffers from a severe shortage of schools and needs approximately eight thousand schools to reach a normal situation and alleviate the pressure caused by double or even triple shifts in some schools. Additionally, there are about two hundred mud-brick schools in Iraq as of 2023, despite the Ministry of Education's plan to build one thousand schools under the controversial Chinese agreement (Iraqi Ministry of Planning, 2019, p. 33).

Third: Educational and Teaching Staff:

Instructors are the most important input in the educational process, as the development of the educational system is directly linked to the presence of experienced and competent instructors in both quality and quantity, without an excess in their numbers. Their preparation must align with the actual need for labor in educational institutions because any surplus leads to only partial utilisation of instructors' services due to inefficiencies in the educational system, which in turn increases costs over a long period and negatively affects productive efficiency (Mohammed, Khawla Jabbar, 2020).

Conversely, if the number of instructors is insufficient to meet the actual demand in the educational system, this becomes an obstacle to the system's functioning. As mentioned, instructors are the fundamental element of the educational process, and their educational competence positively impacts graduates, who are the focus and output of the system.

The competence of instructors must be sequential, connected, and coherent across all educational stages: starting from primary school, then middle school, followed by preparatory school, and finally university level. Any problem occurring at any stage negatively affects students (the output of the educational system) at all stages. Conversely, if the educational process proceeds according to its intended goals at all stages, this provides positive motivation for students throughout all phases (Khalaf, Faleh Hassan, 2017, p. 244).

Teachers play a major role in maximizing the scientific and intellectual potential of students through their leading role in the educational process. However, teachers suffered during various periods and stages from a lack of attention to their economic and social conditions, which forced many of them to leave their jobs and work abroad, especially during the 1990s (Khalaf, Faleh Hassan, 2017, p. 246). After 2003, there was a noticeable improvement in the economic conditions of teachers—whether they are teachers, instructors, or professors—but some laws benefiting teachers, including a law to protect teachers, have yet to be enacted.

Fourth: Curricula and Teaching Methods:

To keep up with the latest scientific developments and updates in curricula, the Ministry of Education reviews these curricula and their progress after each academic cycle. This perspective has changed due to the rapid developments occurring worldwide. Curriculum development takes place at least annually, and this development represents a real challenge facing the educational process because of limited financial allocations for this area or due to financial waste. Changing and developing curricula has also become a source of corruption.

The curricula in Iraq have not reached the required level, neither in quantity nor quality. The educational system suffers from a severe shortage of curricula, and on the other hand, the curricula have not met an internationally acceptable standard. Therefore, regulatory procedures must be established to implement the

curriculum project. Generally, the government determines the content and substance of curricula at all levels within the state, so political stability is necessary to positively reflect on education and upbringing.

Furthermore, the country's economic conditions contribute to curriculum development, along with the possibility of keeping pace with technology if policies are adopted to increase financial resources allocated to the educational system in the Iraqi government budget. This includes investing in the education sector and entering into cooperation agreements with reputable scientific universities (Kazem, Shaimaa Latif, et al., 2020, pp. 76–84).

Fifth: Teaching Methods and Techniques:

The importance of teaching methods lies in being a crucial element of the educational process. This importance focuses on how to properly utilize the scientific material so that learners can achieve the desired objectives from that material (i.e., the educational process as a whole), facilitating the recipient's comprehension of the material or scientific curriculum based on scientific, intellectual, and logical foundations (Rahlan, Antoine, 2008, p. 227).

There are several variables, the most prominent of which are the nature of the material—whether scientific or intellectual—the level and number of recipients. Generally, Arab teaching methods are criticized for relying on rote memorization and repetition, without allowing students to think or research, due to the low level of scientific skills and competencies that primarily depend on the mental interaction expressed by the learner within their educational environment (Majid, Sawsan Shaker, and Al-Zayat, Mohammed, 2008, pp. 177–180).

This may also be due to shortcomings in comprehension. There are modern and advanced methods for conveying information, ideas, and experiences to the recipient. Recently, many colleges have introduced master's studies focused on teaching methods, which is a positive step in the right direction. Additionally, the Iraqi Ministry of Education should equip schools with diagnostic or illustrative teaching aids, but most public schools lack even the simplest of these tools, whereas they are available in private schools.

Sixth: Supervision and Educational Building:

Supervision and educational development focus on closely monitoring the educational process and trying to solve all problems facing the educational system. Although educational work requires a relatively long-time frame to observe the teacher's performance and the transformation in learner behavior, educational development is a multifaceted program that needs continuous follow-up and evaluation by the responsible ministry.

There is a General Directorate for Educational Supervision that operates through departments in each directorate responsible for supervising the educational system's work. The emphasis here is not on the organizational structure but rather on the administrative work and its positive impact on the educational process through supervision and evaluation of the performance of educational institutions (Jassim, Rahim Abd, 2020, p. 56).

The evaluation of the outputs of the educational process in Iraq relies on a set of indicators. Although the multiplicity of indicators may make it difficult for researchers to comprehensively identify and conclusively adopt them, we will consider some indicators approved by the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and the Iraqi Ministry of Education.

Seventh: Challenges at The Level of Scientific Research:

Scientific research is one of the indicators that can be relied upon to evaluate the educational and intellectual movement, due to its importance in reflecting the level of scientific development that a country has reached at a certain stage. Some universities have sought to internationalize their research globally, resulting in a cross-border research and intellectual culture and enabling comparisons between universities. This led to the emergence of global university rankings, which place universities in order according to specific administrative and scientific quality standards.

In advanced countries, the relationship between the investment sector and universities has grown, and multiple parties contribute to funding scientific research. This has encouraged a focus on natural and engineering research. A good relationship between businessmen and universities or the educational sector has recently established what is known as the "knowledge economy," which is the integration of knowledge with production factors and the commercial marketing of knowledge.

In Iraq, however, there is no interconnected and mutual relationship between research and education. Most of the efforts of Iraqi universities are directed toward teaching rather than scientific research, and the funds allocated for research in their budgets are almost negligible. The government has not developed a plan for research policy, target fields, or classification of institutions and completed research. The government's focus on teaching at the expense of scientific research contrasts with the approach in advanced countries (Al-Sudqi, Saeed, 2008, pp. 91-92).

Implications of Institutional Challenges on the Outcomes of Education and Higher Education in Iraq.

The outputs of the educational system reflect the level of its institutional efficiency and its ability to translate educational goals into tangible results that contribute to building human capital and enhancing national development. In the Iraqi context, the institutional challenges mentioned earlier have left clear impacts on the quality, balance, relevance, and sustainability of education, whether in general education stages or higher education. This has contributed to creating a widening gap between the available resources and the expected outputs. These impacts can be classified into six main paths:

Firstly: Poor Quality of Educational Outputs:

The decline in education quality is one of the most prominent direct consequences of escalating institutional challenges. The absence of a clear and unified vision for the educational system, along with confused stated goals, inevitably leads to outputs that do not align with the requirements of development and the labor market.

Weak human resource management, an inflated administrative staff at the expense of teaching staff, and the lack of effective evaluation systems have all contributed to reducing the efficiency of the educational process. This has resulted in graduates lacking essential skills in critical thinking, language, mathematics, and teamwork.

Additionally, the weak scientific content of curricula and reliance on rote teaching methods have contributed to the decline in graduate competency, increased failure rates, and disguised unemployment among youth.

Secondly: The Widening Gap Between Education and the Labour Market

Institutional challenges, especially the lack of coordination between the Ministries of Education and Higher Education, have created a clear gap between what is taught in schools and universities and the skills and abilities needed by the labor market. This gap is particularly evident in humanities, administrative fields, and even some scientific disciplines that lack practical application. This disconnect has resulted in thousands of students graduating annually in oversaturated and unproductive majors, while there is a severe shortage of graduates in vocational and technical fields. Limited strategic planning and the absence of national centers to monitor labor market changes have exacerbated this disparity and weakened education's ability to serve as a solution to unemployment rather than part of the problem.

Third: Inequality in Educational Opportunities Between Provinces

National indicators show that institutional challenges in the educational system do not affect all provinces equally; rather, they are more severe in poor and marginalized areas suffering from a severe shortage of school buildings, teaching staff, and educational materials. The absence of effective decentralization policies has worsened this inequality, as educational decisions remain centralized and do not reflect local realities. Consequently, educational outcomes in deprived provinces show a clear qualitative gap compared to those in major provincial centers, whether in success rates, dropout rates, or access to higher education opportunities.

Fourth: Impact of Weak Legislative and Administrative Infrastructure on Higher Education

Higher education is no less affected by institutional challenges than general education; in many cases, it suffers from even more severe structural problems due to its direct connection to knowledge production and scientific research. The absence of administrative and financial autonomy for universities and the lack of effective boards of trustees have restricted their academic and administrative freedom, making them hostage to ministerial bureaucracy. Weak legislation regulating higher education has led to recurring issues related to program accreditation and uncontrolled expansion of colleges, especially in private education, without clear scientific plans. This dysfunction has reflected negatively on higher education outputs, which suffer from declining rigor and an inflated number of graduates who are neither academically nor professionally qualified.

Fifth: Deficiencies in the Development of Teachers and Academic Staff

Teachers and faculty members form the backbone of any successful educational system. However, weak institutional policies regarding their qualification and development have negatively affected the efficiency and quality of education. Limited continuous training programs, absence of incentive systems, and lack of clear career paths for promotion and evaluation have reduced professional motivation and widened the gap between required and available skills. Additionally, poor teacher preparation in education colleges and the lack of serious practical training programs have impaired new teachers' ability to handle classroom challenges and keep up with contemporary educational developments.

Sixth: Absence of a Culture of Scientific Research and Knowledge Production

One of the most prominent long-term impacts of institutional challenges is the noticeable decline in the culture of scientific research and knowledge production within Iraqi universities. Most universities still focus on rote learning rather than research and scientific thinking, due to weak funding for research, the lack of a clear national strategy to direct research towards state priorities, and poor partnerships between universities and the private sector. This situation has marginalized the role of universities as active centers for producing solutions and policies, weakened their contribution to offering realistic development alternatives, and made higher education outputs have limited impact on their economic and social environment.

CONCLUSION

This paper argues that addressing the security and institutional challenges facing educational policies in Iraq is an essential entry point for reforming the education system, and that advancing education requires comprehensive structural reform that restores its pivotal role in human resource development and post-crisis state-building.

1. The lack of stability in educational policies—both in terms of security and administration—after 2006 contributed to undermining the educational process and weakening the effectiveness of education and higher education institutions in performing their core functions.
2. Security challenges, such as displacement and the destruction of infrastructure, had a direct impact on declining enrollment rates, deteriorating educational environments, and limiting access to education—especially in conflict-affected areas.
3. Structural institutional dysfunction, represented by the absence of a clear strategic vision and weak coordination between educational institutions, led to a noticeable gap between education and the labor market, resulting in an overproduction of unfit graduates.
4. Weak professional development for educational and academic staff—in terms of preparation, training, and incentives—negatively affected the quality and outcomes of education, and further intensified challenges related to teacher and faculty member competency.
5. The absence of a culture of scientific research and knowledge production within Iraqi universities marginalized the role of higher education as a developmental driver and weakened its capacity to contribute effectively to addressing societal issues and shaping national policies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Adopting a comprehensive education reform plan focused on restructuring the educational system, updating curricula, and activating institutional governance to ensure the stability and sustainability of educational policies amid changing environments.
2. Developing an educational security framework by protecting educational institutions in conflict areas, securing a safe and stable learning environment, and ensuring the continuity of education during emergencies.
3. Rebuilding the connection between education and the labour market through the modernisation of academic specialisations, activation of career guidance centres, and alignment of educational policies with national developmental and economic plans.
4. Enhancing the capacities of teaching and academic staff through continuous training programs, effective professional qualifications, and providing a motivating work environment to improve educational and academic performance.
5. Establishing a national strategy to activate scientific research in Iraqi universities and link its outcomes to the needs of the state and society, with clearly allocated research budgets and encouragement of research partnerships with the public and private sectors.

REFERENCES

- Abdul Jassim, R. (2020). *Evaluating the performance of educational supervisors considering their required supervisory tasks*. Thaer Al-Esami Foundation for Printing, Publishing and Distribution, Baghdad, p. 56.
- Al Jazeera. (2023). Iraq war, 20 years on: Visualising the impact of the invasion. Retrieved from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/longform/2023/4/5/iraq-war-20-years-on-visualising-the-impact-of-the-invasio>
- Al-Haidari, I. (2019). *The Iraqi personality: The post-fall phase and personality distortions*. Adnan Publishing and Printing House, p. 109.

- Al-Hariri, J. Y. (2018). *Education, higher education, and scientific research in the Arab region: A case study of Iraq after the 2003 US occupation*. Dar Al-Jinan, p. 108.
- Al-Masha', M. M. (2012). *A proposed model for strategic planning for higher education: An analytical study in some Iraqi universities*. Bayt Al-Hikma, pp. 24–25.
- Al-Mazrou, A. W. B. H., & Mohammed, M. A. H. (2015). *The construction and formation of educational values*. King Fahd Library, p. 170.
- Al-Sidqi, S. (2008). *Arab universities and the quality of scientific research: A reading of scientific standards*. Arab Future, (350), Center for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, pp. 91–92.
- Alwan, Ali Mohammed, & Mohammed, Khawla Jabbar. (2020). *Obstacles of Educational Policy and Their Impact on Political Awareness in Iraq after 2003: A Model of Political, Social, and Cultural Constraints*. Political Issues Journal, (61), College of Political Science, Al-Nahrain University.
- Dewachi, Omar, & Ali, Zahra S. (2024). Education, displacement, and gender in Iraq after 2014. International Journal of Lifelong Education. Retrieved from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00187259.2024.2440410>
- Group of Researchers. (2016). *The great displacement (The IDP crisis in Iraq after the ISIS war)*. Biladi Center for Strategic Studies, p. 38.
- Hamza, K. M. (2011). *The strategic project for education in Iraq*. Bayt Al-Hikma, p. 9.
- Hegel, L. (2016). *The displacement crisis in Iraq*. Center for Civilians in Conflict and the International Human Rights Group, p. 8.
https://www.unicef.org/mena/media/6511/file/Iraq%20Country%20Report%20on%20OOSC_EN.pdf
- Iraqi Ministry of Planning. (2019). *Iraq Vision 2030: Annual report*. Baghdad, p. 33.
- Kazem, S. L., et al. (2020). *The Malaysian experience in applying higher education quality and the possibility of its application in Iraq*. Nabras Publishing, Baghdad, pp. 76–84.
- Khalaf, F. H. (2017). *Economics and planning of education*. Jidar for Global Books, Amman, p. 244.
- Khalaf, F. H. (2017). *Ibid.*, p. 246.
(Note: In APA, "Ibid." is not used. Repeat full citation or use a shortened title if needed.)
- Lafta, F. K. H. (2024). *Educational public policy in Iraq after the COVID-19 pandemic: A study of reality and the future* (Unpublished master's thesis). Al-Ameed Institute for Graduate Studies, Najaf, p. 96.
- Majid, S. S., & Al-Zayyat, M. (2008). *Quality and academic accreditation of public and university education institutions*. Safa Publishing and Printing House, Amman, pp. 177–180.
- Nassar, S. M., et al. (2020). *History of education: A continuous silent revolution from the dawn of civilization to postmodernity*. Al-Mahrousa Center for Publishing and Press Services, Cairo, pp. 261–262.
- Rahima, N. S. (n.d.). *The impact of armed conflicts on the quality of education*. Al-Mustansiriya Journal for Arab and International Studies, (57), p. 237.
- Rahlan, A. (2008). *Arabs and the challenges of science and triviality: Progress without change*. Center for Arab Unity Studies, Beirut, p. 227.
- Raho, G. I. (n.d.). *Statistical observations on the underdevelopment of education in Iraq*. Ishtar TV. Retrieved from <http://www.ishtartv.com/viewarticle,76894.htm>
- Saleh, A. A. (2018). *Population displacement and its impact on Iraqi national security* (Unpublished master's thesis). Al-Ameed Institute for Graduate Studies, Najaf, p. 122.
- Ubaid, S. H. (n.d.). *The role of political socialization in Iraq's democratic transformation after 2003* (Unpublished master's thesis). University of Baghdad, College of Political Science, p. 108.
- UNICEF. (2020). *Country Report on Out-of-School Children – Iraq*. United Nations Children's Fund. Retrieved from:
- United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2019). *Summary of the 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report: Migration, displacement, and education*, p. 11.
- Yaqoub, Sahar Jabbar. (2021). *A Reading into the Reality of the University Education Facility in Iraq: A Critical Analytical Study*. Political Issues Journal, (64), College of Political Science, Al-Nahrain University.
- Yasser, Hadeel Latif. (2024). *Iraq's Educational, Housing, and Climate Policies*. Political Issues Journal, (77), College of Political Science, Al-Nahrain University.
- Zabon, A. A., & Abdul, M. J. (2022). *Investment in human capital and its relationship to education and employment in Iraq*. Al-Kut Journal for Economic and Administrative Sciences, (21), p. 337.