IMPROVING THE SCHOOL BUILDING DELIVERY PROCESS IN POST CONFLICT IRAQ

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ABSTRACT

The school building delivery process has been affected by the prolonged armed conflicts and wars that took place in Iraq. The evaluation was carried out through identifying the strengths, challenges and recommendations of the process. The study has also linked the challenges that the 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 adopted a multiple case study as the research strategy, using Saunders Onion model. Use of a multiple-case study has allowed the researcher to ensure precision and validity. Findings showed that the delivery process has manifested some strengths in post-conflict Iraq. The study also made recommendations that are derived from the features of the school building delivery process gaps and complexities. When a war-torn society begins to make changes in education, it can bring about changes in the entire society.

KEYWORDS: Education, wars, school building delivery process.

1. INTRODUCTION

The most tragic issue about conflicts and wars is their long-term consequences.
These consequences do not end with the official end of the conflict. They not only affect buildings, streets, schools and hospitals, but also education, health, physical infrastructure, power distribution, societal and cultural behaviour and education (Askari, 2012).

However, the negative effects that wars and conflicts have on the fundamental standards (Fink, 2010) of morality and people's behaviour and mentality are the most catastrophic consequences of wars and conflicts.

For instance, wars strengthen corruption in the post-conflict society (Ingram et al., 2015). Post-conflict era is characterised with re-building the physical infrastructure of the country. (Eadie & Rees, 2015). The most negatively affected sector by wars and conflicts is education, in particular schools (Johnston, 2016). In the post-conflict society, many schools are destroyed (Sweetman, 2005), the number of

teachers has decreased either because of deaths or leaving the country to escape the conflict (Oudraat, 2011),

2. THE BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH:

The most tragic issue about conflicts and wars is their long-term consequences. These consequences do not end with the official end of the conflict. They not only affect buildings, streets, schools and hospitals, but also education, health, physical infrastructure, power distribution, societal and cultural behaviour and education (Askari, 2012). However, the negative effects that wars and conflicts have on the fundamental standards (Fink, 2010) of morality and people's behaviour and mentality are the most catastrophic consequences of wars and conflicts. For instance, wars strengthen corruption in the post-conflict society (Ingram et al., 2015). Post-conflict era is characterised with re-building the physical infrastructure of the country. (Eadie & Rees, 2015). The most negatively affected sector by wars and conflicts is education, in particular schools (Johnston, 2016). In the post-conflict society many schools are destroyed (Sweetman, 2005), the number of teachers has decreased either because of deaths or leaving the country to escape the conflict (Oudraat, 2011), classrooms become crowded (Dupuy & Peters, 2010), children are devastated and scared (Cooper & Vargas, 2008), school facilities are lacked (Osei, 2009), and teachers are not very qualified (Clarke & O'Donoghue, 2013). Politically speaking, the government is weakened (Loevinsohn, 2008) and the authority of the police is limited because all the fund is transferred to military actions and the policemen are sent for military missions (Jong, 2015). In a post-conflict society efforts are made to re-build the country and its infrastructure and to re-create an atmosphere that allows people to go back to their normal life. Similar experiences and research on the topic of post-conflict countries and societies demonstrate that the best and more effective issue to start with when re-building a post-conflict society is education (Butcher et al., 2015). There are good reasons to recommend starting with education to re-build a post-conflict society.

Firstly, education helps establish peace and eliminate the causes for which the conflicts have taken place (Fontana, 2016).

Secondly, schools which are the central issues of education stand for the healthy places that protect children from being abused and used for military actions (Clarke, & O'Donoghue, 2013).

Thirdly, schools also promote the culture of accepting others who are different and encourage inclusive learning (Christie, 2011). Rebuilding schools is believed to give hope to devastated people in the post-conflict era (Benard, 2008) and motivate them to overcome the catastrophic consequences of prolonged armed conflict that has destroyed the culture and the structure of the country. Re-building schools also gives people the feeling that the authority of the state and government is back which means the return of safety and security (Benard, 2008).

However, re-building schools in a post-conflict country undergoes many difficulties which make achieving this project a hard task. Re-building schools in a post-conflict country has its problems (Clarke, & O'Donoghue, 2013) which are related to the conflicts and their political, economic, financial, and administrative consequences. However, there are other types of problems which are pertinent to the structure of the society where the project is being established as well as to the cultural features (Clarke & O'Donoghue, 2013) which penetrate the administrative patterns and the relationships within the organisations that are in charge of re-building schools in the post conflict time. Wars and conflicts can deepen the negative aspects in a society such as corruption and the hierarchal patterns of governments, bureaucracy, favouritism, power imbalance, the unequal distribution of decision-making power, authoritarian figure dominance: domination and subjection, and aggressive behaviour (Fink, 2010). These factors together make re-building schools in a post-conflict society a hard task, though indispensable as the first step in re-building a peaceful, settled and democratic society.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:
3.1 Research Problem:
The statement of the research problem of Iraq is a country that has been torn by wars and conflicts for long years not to mention the sanctions that were imposed on it. Iraq's infrastructure has been destroyed and Iraqi people are expecting the process of re-building to start so they can restore peace and security which they have been deprived of over decades.

The state of schools in Iraq can be summarised as follows: Schools that are partly destroyed, schools that are completely destroyed, and schools which are not destroyed but crowded either with 3 students or the displaced (Kopka, 2011). Re-building schools is a real start for building peace and democracy and of the return of police and government authority.

Like any post-conflict country, Iraq is facing difficulties when re-building schools. These difficulties spring from the political, economic, social and administrative consequences of the prolonged armed conflict on the one hand and also from 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.

First, conflict has left the country weakened as far as funds are concerned, politically torn, and economically vulnerable. Second, 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 school building delivery that enables Iraqi society 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.

The problem can be defined through the following questions:
1- What is the current status of school building delivery process in Iraq?
2- What is the school building delivery process?
3- What are the lessons learned from international contexts that have improved the delivery of schools?
4- What is the status of the interaction between the stakeholders and the Ministry of Education in terms of school building process?
5- What is the best strategy for improving delivery of school building in Iraq and the requirements that meets the needs of the current era?

3.2 The research objectives:
1- Evaluate the current status of school building delivery in post-conflict Iraq.
2- Explore the school building delivery process in general and with particular reference to Iraq.
3- Critically review the good practice and lessons learnt from international contexts that have improved the delivery of schools.
4- Explore the interaction between the stakeholders and the Ministry of Education in terms of school building delivery process in Iraq.
5- Produce a strategy for improved school building delivery process in Iraq.

This study does not only provide information about the political and economic conditions that influence school building delivery process but also go further to investigate how cultural and social factors within Iraq also shape this process. The contribution of this study is also represented in surveying the Iraqi social fibre and how it impacts the relationships and performance within the Ministry of Education and among the stakeholders, and thus, the school building delivery process in post-conflict Iraq. At the practical level, this study is aimed to establish a strategy that enables stakeholders and the Ministry of Education to face the challenges stated in the collated data through semi-structured interviews. This strategy has taken into account the political, economic, social and cultural context of post-conflict Iraq. In order to be applicable, any strategy should take into account the setting where it is applied.

3.3 The research aim:
The aim of this research is to develop a school building delivery strategy in Iraq. It is the intention of the researcher that the above strategy will help the Ministry of Education to improve the school

building delivery process in the given circumstances that post-conflict Iraq has experienced and which has caused negative consequences at different aspects of life in Iraq. It has been essential, therefore, to survey the circumstances that have prevailed Iraq in the post-conflict era in order to understand and explore how these circumstances affect the school building delivery process. In order to achieve the above aim, the following objectives are established for this research study.

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. They also advise that the school building should include • Administrative offices, • Safe water, • Hygiene facilities, • Safety provision, • Health provision, • Library, • Landscaping, • Bathrooms, • Open spaces and • Kitchens.

After establishing the research aim, objectives and questions, the methodology of the research should be designed in a way that addresses these issues, i.e., achieves the research aim and objectives and answers the research questions.

4. ESTABLISHING:

After establishing the research aim, objectives and questions, research methodology should be designed in a way that addresses these issues i.e. achieves the research aim and objectives and answers the research questions. Research design is the process that transforms an idea or a question from the state of being a thought into a meaningful and purposeful investigation. Research design refers to the process itself rather than the end product (Gatrell et al., 2011). Research design is a framework that is used by the researcher to address research issues and questions. It is about the entities that will be used and accessed by the researcher to test hypotheses or establish a theory (Ang, 2014). Saunders et al. (2009). They present the Research Onion a model that explains all the stages and issues addressed in research which represents all the issues underlying data collection and analysis.

5. The characteristics of the present study are:

The present study aim	The research aims to create a strategy regarding school building delivery process in post-conflict Iraq in the light of economic, social, cultural, administrative and political challenges.
The present study objectives	Evaluate the current status of school building delivery in post-conflict Iraq Explore the school building delivery process Critically review the good practice and lessons learnt from international contexts that have improved the delivery of schools The interaction between the stakeholders and the Ministry of Education in terms of school building process Produce a strategy for improved delivery of school buildings in Iraq
Research questions	What is the current status of school building delivery in Iraq? What is the school building delivery process? What are the lessons learned from international contexts that have improved the delivery of schools? What is the status of the interaction between the stakeholders and the Ministry of Education in terms of school building process? What is the best strategy for improving delivery of school building in Iraq and that meets the needs and the requirements of the current era?
Research philosophy	Interpretivism
Research approach	Inductive
Research strategy	Multiple- Case study
Research design	Qualitative
Data collection method	Semi- structured Interviews
Data analysis method	Discourse Analysis

6. RESEARCH RESULTS:

The main features of the school building delivery in post-conflict Iraq have been explored and the challenges that face this process have also been identified via the participants' perspectives and

viewpoints. The results of the whole study will be summarised in order to identify the conclusions and recommendations.

Firstly, discussing the achievement of every research objective, secondly, presenting the theoretical and practical implications, thirdly, suggesting further research areas.

Objective 1: Evaluate the current status of school building delivery in post-conflict Iraq This objective has been achieved in both the literature review and the data. The literature review has provided a detailed-description of the status of school building delivery process in Iraq over the years of pre-conflict, conflict and post-conflict. The empirical study has also provided detailed explanation of the challenges that the school building delivery process is facing at all stages.

Objective 2: Explore the school building delivery process This objective has been achieved in both the literature review and the data findings. The literature review in this study has presented details about the stages of school building delivery process and what happens at every stage. The data elicited from the participants via semi-structured interviewing have contributed to constructing more knowledge about the school building delivery process

Objective 3: Critically review the good practice and lessons learnt from international contexts that have improved the delivery of schools. This objective has been achieved in both the literature review and the data findings. The literature review presents experiences of post-conflict countries that have survived the austerity and the financial scarcity in the post-conflict era.

Objective 4: The interaction between the stakeholders and the Ministry of Education in terms of school building process. This objective has been achieved in both the literature review and the data findings. The interaction between the stakeholders and the Ministry of Education is formal shaped by the superior-subordinate relationships.

Objective 5: Produce a strategy for improved delivery of school buildings in Iraq a strategy that has been suggested from the interviews for a more effective school building delivery process in post-conflict Iraq. The elements of strategy have been derived from the participants' description and detailed discussion of the school building delivery process in post-conflict Iraq and the challenges this process is facing.

6.1 Discussion of the Results:

Although there is extensive literature on post-conflict countries and school building especially the African countries, there is still a dearth of literature on Iraq. This study has contributed to the literature

of post-conflict countries in general and school building delivery process in particular by constructing knowledge about the school building delivery process in post-conflict Iraq and that its features that have been shaped by the political, economic, social and cultural factors. The study and its findings are unique. The sources of uniqueness are that the study focus is on the stages of the school building delivery in war-torn Iraq and the characteristics of every stage. Approaching school building delivery in this way has not taken place before in the literature about Iraq or about the school building delivery process in other post-conflict countries. Investigating the school building delivery process within a political, economic, social and cultural framework of Iraq is also unique. Another source of uniqueness is that the study has identified the challenges that hinder the progress of school building delivery process which can be related to the political, economic, social and cultural real situation of Iraq. The study contributes to the literature by identifying these challenges while other studies have only surveyed the political and economic challenges. Another source of uniqueness is the recommendations and the strategy suggested. Because the study has addressed the challenges of the school building delivery process in a unique way, its recommendations will also be unique because they are based on discussing these challenges. Besides that, the data that have been collected through semi-structured interviews are original and have not been published before; which is another source of uniqueness.

6.2 Contribution to knowledge

The study contribution to knowledge will be represented by the recommendations that were made in the final chapter. These recommendations will be sent to the participants to be used as a guide to improve the school delivery process post -conflict Iraq. The study and its recommendations will widen the participants' and everyone who is involved in school delivery process, to benefit from other' experience and adopt dialogue and communication as a means to develop the performance in all the stages of the school building delivery process. The study will aid in discovering the gaps in the performance of the stakeholders and the most effective way to deal and bridge these gaps. The stakeholders are aware that the absence of communication and dialogues as well as accepting the other impacted the whole process of school delivery, so they will endeavour to find treatment which eradicates these negative aspects.

Communication will be encouraged amongst the stakeholders by undertaking training courses that show the value and the importance of communication amongst stakeholders and between stakeholders and the management. This also can be done through creating an environment which enables the stakeholders, and everyone involved in the school building delivery process to express their own views. Establishing an atmosphere of equality also helps and encourages communication.

6.3 Contribution to Practice:

The study has created a strategy that supports stakeholders and the government to build and deliver

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schools in a way that guarantees benefits for the children and parents and community. The pillars of this strategy are respecting the Iraqi society uniqueness and values, the Iraqi schooling and education special context, and increasing needs for a new educational and legislative systems. The study, nevertheless, does not claim that this strategy will lead to dramatic changes in the whole country of Iraq; the study suggests starting with schools and education will gradually lead to changes in people's attitudes and concepts. Schools are minimised copy of the bigger society and they are interdependent. When the change occurs in schools, it extends to include other aspects of

6.4 For further research:

This study can be a foundation for further studies to build on to enhance knowledge about the school building delivery process in Iraq or in any other post-conflict country. There are some suggested areas of further research:

1- Similar studies with a different research boundary:

This study has focused on the stages of school building delivery process as the research centre. There are other areas for searching such as hospital building delivery process.

2- Similar studies with different units of analysis:

The unit of analysis of this study was every stage of the school building delivery process.

Further research can focus on one stage and the sub-stages that constitute each one.

3- Similar studies with different contexts:

This study has been undertaken in Iraq. Further studies can cover other countries that have been or are being torn apart by wars and conflicts such as Syria, Libya, Yemen and Somalia.

7. CONCLUSION

The studies outlined in the report have addressed the school building delivery process in post-conflict Iraq as previously details were scare in relation to this topic. This study covers this topic and creates an insight of the stages that make up the school building delivery process and the political, economic, social and cultural factors that play a role in shaping these stages. The study, therefore, contributes to the knowledge as follows:

• 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.

This research paper has also recommended a framework for school establishing for Iraq which takes into account the Iraqi context and the technological age 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 building of society that tolerates differences and variety; which is why the human rights-based approach is an appropriate way to enable Iraq take off in the journey to democracy.

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