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Providing a Model for Implementing the Educational Voucher Scheme in Iraq's Education System

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Abstract

The present study aims to identify an appropriate model for implementing the educational voucher scheme in Iraq's education system and is classified as an applied-developmental and mixed-method (qualitative-quantitative) research. The statistical population included university professors, directors of education departments, and school administrators in Iraq. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews, while quantitative data were gathered using validated questionnaires. The qualitative findings indicate the presence of structural, economic, legal, cultural, and social challenges as barriers to the implementation of the scheme, while internal and external factors act as facilitators. Moreover, the feasibility assessment of the implementation reveals the necessity of stable economic conditions, socio-cultural homogeneity, and the presence of strong political will. The final implementation model was examined using structural equation modeling (SEM), and content validation was conducted through CVR and CVI indices. The results show a significant relationship between various factors and the components of the implementation model. Based on the findings, the implementation of the educational voucher scheme in Iraq requires the collaboration of all stakeholders, allocation of sufficient budget, and the establishment of appropriate legal and managerial infrastructures. This scheme could pave the way for improving the quality of education and reducing educational inequalities in the country.

Keywords: Educational vouchers, Public-private partnership, Iraq education system.

1. Introduction

The trend of increasing marketization of education has been particularly significant in developing countries. This issue has been especially prominent in low-income countries over the past two decades (Ahmadi et al., 2023; Rah Najat & Negarestani, 2024). The increasing role of the private sector alongside public education in delivering education in low-income countries has been well documented in recent years (Rahimi et al., 2022). Educational vouchers are government-issued certificates that reduce the cost of tuition at eligible private or public schools. These programs vary in terms of eligible



recipients, funding mechanisms, and the participation of private schools, and are usually targeted at low-income students. Some vouchers are funded by private sources and may also include religious schools (Epple et al., 2017).

Educational vouchers are the most widespread form of public-private partnership in education, with numerous examples of different systems globally. These include the nationwide voucher system in Chile, targeted voucher programs in Colombia, social stipends in Pakistan, per capita grants in Zimbabwe, voucher schemes in the United States, open enrollment systems in the United Kingdom, nationwide voucher programs in the Netherlands, and targeted individual entitlements and independent school subsidies in New Zealand (Patrinos, 2013). Vouchers are either given directly to parents by the government or sent directly to the school on behalf of the parents. Through vouchers, students from underprivileged families can escape from local schools with low educational quality and enroll in schools that are more culturally appropriate for them (Levin, 2002).

The financing process of educational vouchers is based on the principle of funding following the student, which fosters competition and incentives among public and private schools. Parents may contribute part of the tuition, and selected schools must meet minimum standards to satisfy parental demands and offer diverse educational programs. Schools meeting specific criteria receive compensation from the government equivalent to the value of collected vouchers. Higher-quality schools can attract more students and thereby acquire more vouchers, while weaker schools are forced either to improve their quality or close. Furthermore, student distribution among schools is not based on geographical criteria but can be targeted based on indicators such as family income and gender (Ansari, 2004).

The primary objectives of educational vouchers can be summarized as follows: granting consumer choice, enhancing participation spirit, fostering interest, generosity, and altruism, increasing competition, facilitating broader access to private schools for low-income families and other marginalized or minority groups (Elacqua, 2012), improving student learning across all levels of the educational system, and providing a cost-effective model of education delivery for targeted child populations (Kline, 2016).

The educational voucher initiative has been proposed as a modern educational policy aimed at expanding equal opportunities and improving the quality of students' education. While it enables parents to choose schools that match their children's needs, it faces numerous challenges. Among the key enablers of this policy are equal educational opportunities (Kline, 2016), competition among schools, responsiveness to local needs, governmental support (Wylie, 1998), and political stability (Kaul, 2018). Effective implementation of educational voucher programs faces various challenges. One such challenge is the lack of transparency and corruption, which may undermine public trust and support for these initiatives (Egalite et al., 2020; Elacqua, 2012). In developing countries, managerial obstacles, neglect of actual family and student needs, and the issue of "cream-skimming" (Ansari, 2004) hinder the success of these programs. Other barriers include imbalances in educational resources, discrimination, and difficulties in empowering parents. Inequitable resource distribution may disadvantage public schools (Magness & Surprenant, 2019), and concerns exist about the potential exacerbation of racial and economic discrimination (Henderson & Brown, 2016; Kaul, 2018). Additionally, lack of capital access and insufficient educational infrastructure, resulting from flawed economic policy, can negatively impact educational outcomes (Patrinos, 2013). Iraq's educational system faces serious challenges related to funding, quality, and efficiency. For instance, three million children are out of the educational system, and many schools operate double shifts (Al-Aboudi, 2020). Although the Iraqi Constitution allows for cultural responsiveness, political instability has hindered its full implementation. Nevertheless, Iraq holds considerable potential for demand-side mechanisms, particularly voucher systems. Leveraging private sector managerial capabilities to foster competition and improve quality can be advantageous. Some experts believe a balanced mix of public and private sectors is the most effective solution to the educational challenges (Al-Aboudi, 2020). Articles 34 and 28 of the Constitution authorize the government to provide free education using national resources and offer the flexibility required to implement educational vouchers (Al-Aboudi, 2020).

Implementing public-private partnership mechanisms within a suitable legal and regulatory framework can be an effective solution to overcome challenges in the education sector. Therefore, the central issue of this research is the feasibility of implementing an educational voucher scheme in Iraq. Establishing a secure legal environment to facilitate public-private cooperation is essential. Theories emphasize the necessity of a legal environment that supports private sector involvement in



public services. Effective legal, policy, and regulatory environments are vital for sustaining such partnerships. Ambiguity and lack of transparency in this domain can erode investor confidence and jeopardize projects. Services and their costs must be balanced to incentivize efficiency improvements. Partnership design must align with the local context and, where change is not possible, adapt to existing conditions (Zeng et al., 2009).

Strong stakeholder commitment, effective risk management, transparency, accountability, and productive collaboration between public and private sectors (Twinomuhwezi & Herman, 2020) can facilitate successful voucher program implementation, while their absence can pose serious obstacles. Mannan (2014) emphasized the importance of stable macroeconomic conditions, legal frameworks, and social support (Mannan, 2014). Twinomuhwezi and Herman (2020) pointed to the necessity of regular policy review, sufficient funding, and appropriate partner selection (Twinomuhwezi & Herman, 2020). Yun et al. (2015) linked success to implementation capability and risk-sharing strategies (Yun et al., 2015). Reviewing the implementation of educational voucher schemes in various countries, especially developing ones, offers practical insights. The United States features a decentralized educational system with diverse voucher programs, including tax credits, financial subsidies, and private foundations. Programs like the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (1990) and Florida's Opportunity Scholarships for low-income families have been developed. Similar initiatives existed in Maine and Vermont as early as the 1800s, and Colombia launched the PACES program in 1992. In India, the Premji Foundation offered vouchers in 2008 for low-income student enrollment. Since 1981, Chile has operated a subsidized private school voucher system, though recent reforms have introduced tuition caps and student selection limitations. Other countries like Denmark, the Netherlands, New Zealand, and Sweden have specific independent school subsidy models, each with unique challenges and opportunities (Epple et al., 2017).

Therefore, the present study, aimed at providing a model for implementing the educational voucher scheme in Iraq's education system, is classified as an "applied-developmental" research.

2. Methodology

Given the use of both qualitative and quantitative data, this study is identified as a "mixed-method (qualitative-quantitative)" research. The qualitative section of the study population included Iraqi university professors with expertise in the field of education (comprising 155 individuals) and general directors of the education departments across Iraq's provinces (comprising 19 individuals), all of whom were selected as samples for both qualitative and quantitative sections. In the quantitative section, in addition to these two groups, all school principals in different districts of Baghdad's education system—amounting to 1900 principals at the elementary and secondary levels—were also considered.

In the qualitative section, sampling of expert professors was conducted through purposive and criterion-based selection (with criteria such as published works in the field of school privatization, school financing, and educational efficiency) up to the point of theoretical saturation (equal to 10 individuals). In the quantitative section, using the same criteria, 55 professors were selected purposively. For the general directors of provincial education departments, sampling was conducted via census method in both qualitative and quantitative sections, totaling 18 individuals.

In the quantitative section, in addition to these two groups, school principals were selected based on the Krejcie-Morgan table (1970), using quota sampling according to gender and educational level in the city of Baghdad, totaling 342 individuals.

For qualitative data collection, semi-structured interviews were conducted to examine, in depth, the barriers, facilitators, appropriate implementation strategies, and necessary economic, social, cultural, and political conditions for implementing the educational voucher scheme in Iraq's education system. Based on the research literature and interview results, three questionnaires (barriers, facilitators, implementation strategies, and feasibility of implementing the voucher scheme in light of economic, social, cultural, and political conditions) were designed using a five-point Likert scale.

Qualitative data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. Content validity of the model was assessed through CVR and CVI indices. The final implementation model for the educational voucher scheme was tested using structural equation modeling (SEM) and PLS software.

3. Findings and Results



Research Question 1 – What are the barriers to implementing the educational voucher scheme in Iraq's education system?

Table 1 presents the primary concepts, sub-themes, and main themes derived from the coding of interview texts related to this question.

Table 1. Barriers to Implementing Educational Voucher Scheme in Iraq

Main Theme	Sub-theme	Concepts	Page 4
Structural Challenges	Government Intervention	Extensive governmental involvement in school affairs; excessive sensitivity toward education; intervention in price setting	
	Centralization and Intense Oversight	Centralized decision-making; excessive power concentration; limited decentralization; centralized HR management	
	Fear of Marketization and Distrust	Concerns about private sector's influence; profit motives; fear of decline in education quality	
	Lack of Governmental Support	Inadequate support mechanisms such as vouchers or subsidies	
	Lack of Political Will	Unwillingness to reform; absence of political will and state motivation	
Economic Challenges	Economic Inequality	Severe income gaps; unequal access to quality education; low per capita income	
	Economic Structure	Oil-dependent economy; inflation impact; lack of private sector engagement	
	Household Financial Capacity	Limited family finances to supplement vouchers; unwillingness to pay tuition	
Legal Challenges	Legal Instability	Inflexibility and contradictions in legal frameworks; inadequate laws for private investment	
Cultural and Social Challenges	Lack of Cultural Readiness	Resistance to changes in organizational culture	
	Resistance to Change	Staff resistance; adherence to traditional methods; fear of market-based reform	
Private Sector Challenges	Lack of Motivation	Government pricing control; economic instability; bureaucratic obstacles	
	Low Investment Return	Low profitability in the education sector	
Design and Implementation Challenges	Complex Design	Difficulties in planning and executing the scheme	
Infrastructure Challenges	System Transition	Problems shifting from public to participatory models	
	Quality Monitoring	Ensuring and maintaining educational quality under the new system	
	Implementation Costs	High costs for design, execution, and oversight	
	Equitable Distribution	Ensuring equal access, especially in deprived areas	
	Technological Infrastructure	Lack of stable and strong information systems	
	Skilled Human Resources	Need for qualified teachers and school leaders	
	Transportation Infrastructure	Inadequate urban and intercity transport facilities	
	Transport Security	Weak safety in school transport systems	

Research Question 2 – What are the facilitating factors for implementing the educational voucher scheme in Iraq's education system?

Table 2. Initial Concepts, Sub-Themes, and Main Themes of Facilitating Factors for Implementing the Educational Voucher Scheme

Main Theme	Sub-theme	Concepts
Internal Factors within Education	Efficiency	Improvement in the performance of the educational system; increase in efficiency and effectiveness of the system
	Flexibility in School Choice	Parental selection of schools based on children's needs and priorities
	Diversification	Demand in society for diverse educational programs; societal demand for higher quality education; the need to provide a broad spectrum of educational services at different prices
	Competition	Creation of competition among education service providers and schools; breaking monopolies; improving quality of services; establishing a competitive environment among providers
	Increased Demand for Quality Education	Enhancement of educational quality; increased labor market competition and globalization; necessity of high-quality and diverse education; low quality in public schools and its impact on demand for private education
	Educational Equity	Reduction of inequality and provision of equal opportunities for all; ensuring access to quality education for everyone; the importance of equal access to quality education; providing equal opportunities across all social groups; addressing educational inequality and lack of access
	Private Good	Education as a tradable good
	Accountability and Transparency	Emphasis on accountability and responsibility
	Changing Attitudes and Beliefs	Shifting perceptions about the role of the private sector in education; changing views on the role of government and private actors; altering perspectives on the role of families in education



External Factors outside Education	Resource Constraints	Budgetary and resource limitations; reduction of financial burden on the government
	Legal Support	Adequate funding; establishment of necessary infrastructure; development of appropriate laws and regulations

Research Question 3 – Given the economic, social, cultural, and political conditions of the country, is it feasible to implement the educational voucher mechanism in the education system?

Table 3. Initial Concepts, Sub-Themes, and Main Themes of Key Challenges to the Feasibility of Implementing the Educational Voucher Scheme

Main Theme	Sub-theme
Economic Conditions	Severe economic fluctuations; high inflation; budgetary constraints
Social Conditions	Social inequalities; large-scale migration; cultural and linguistic diversity across regions
Cultural Conditions	Varied perspectives on the role of government in education; education marketization; parental choice rights
Political Conditions	Political stability; existence of strong political will for educational reforms; support for innovative programs
Educational Infrastructure	Poor state of educational infrastructure; dilapidated buildings; lack of equipment; shortage of skilled human resources

Implementation of the educational voucher scheme in any country, including Iraq, requires the availability of a set of conditions. These conditions are designed to ensure the success of the scheme and enhance the quality of education. The following section assesses the feasibility of implementing this scheme in Iraq.

Table 4. Initial Concepts, Sub-Themes, and Main Themes for Feasibility of Implementing the Educational Voucher Scheme

Main Theme	Sub-theme	Concept
Required Infrastructure	Robust Information System	A comprehensive system for managing vouchers, student enrollment, school payments, and data collection
	Accurate School Database	Detailed information about all schools: location, capacity, quality of education, and operational costs
	Reliable Banking Network	A widespread and trustworthy banking infrastructure
Economic Conditions	Sufficient Budget Allocation	Adequate funding for implementing the scheme and transferring vouchers to families
	Economic Stability	Minimization of extreme economic fluctuations; relative macroeconomic stability
	Household Income Level	Families' ability to afford education; impact of income on decision-making and demand for private education
	Investment Returns and Risk Reduction	Return on investment in education; motivation for investing in the education sector
Socio-Cultural Conditions	Social Acceptance	Cultural and societal compatibility of the scheme
	Public Awareness and Culturalization	Public awareness of the scheme's benefits and operation; informing families of their rights and the importance of education; preparing a cultural environment for change and school choice
	Parental Involvement	Active participation of parents in school selection for their children
Legal and Managerial Conditions	Suitable Legal Framework	Reforming education laws and regulations to align with the voucher system
	Strong Oversight Institution	Supervising scheme implementation; evaluating school performance; preventing misuse
	Efficient Management Staff	Competent and specialized managerial personnel
School-related Conditions	Government Support for Private Sector	Legal and financial support for the private sector; political will and state support for private participation
	Healthy School Competition	Improving service delivery and raising educational quality
	Supervision of School Quality	Evaluating and monitoring the quality of education in schools
	Expansion of School Capacity	Enhancing human resources, educational equipment, and offering diverse educational programs
Other Conditions	Flexibility of the Scheme	Revising the scheme based on evaluation results and contextual conditions
	Cooperation with the Private Sector	Active collaboration with private sector entities

Research Question 4 – Given the economic, social, cultural, and political conditions of the country, what are the strategic approaches for implementing the educational voucher mechanism in the education system?



Table 5. Initial Concepts, Sub-Themes, and Main Themes for Strategic Approaches to Implementing the Educational Voucher Scheme

Main Theme	Sub-theme	Concept
Development of a Comprehensive and Long-term Plan	Clear Goal Setting	Improving educational quality; increasing equity; enhancing parental choice; reducing governmental costs
	Identification of Challenges and Opportunities	Recognizing and analyzing the opportunities created by the voucher scheme
	Designing an Appropriate Model	Designing the scheme based on specific national circumstances
Infrastructure Development	Robust Information System	Creating a comprehensive information system to manage vouchers, monitor schools, and track student enrollment
	Expansion of School Capacity	Developing human resources, equipment, and educational programs
	Training Human Resources	Training teachers and principals for the new system; implementing innovative teaching methods
Fair Distribution of Vouchers	Defining Distribution Criteria	Allocating vouchers based on criteria such as regional deprivation, household economic status, and student academic performance
	Establishing Oversight Mechanisms	Ensuring fair distribution through robust oversight mechanisms
Monitoring School Quality	Establishing Clear Standards	Defining specific quality standards for schools
	School Performance Evaluation	Regular evaluation and monitoring of underperforming schools
Stakeholder Participation	Government Involvement	Governmental support and resource allocation for scheme implementation
	Private Sector Participation	Encouraging private investment in education and establishment of high-quality private schools
	Engagement of Parents, Teachers, and Civil Society	Inclusion of parents, educators, and civil organizations in scheme design and execution
Gradual Implementation	Pilot Implementation	Launching the scheme on a small scale in selected regions
	Gradual Expansion	Nationwide expansion based on pilot evaluation results
Flexibility in Execution	Readiness for Adaptation	Modifying the scheme in response to evolving conditions and educational system dynamics

Main Research Question – What is the final model for implementing the educational voucher scheme in Iraq's education system?

The implementation of the educational voucher scheme in Iraq is a complex and multifaceted undertaking that requires careful attention to various conditions and details. With the establishment of essential infrastructure, allocation of sufficient funding, creation of an appropriate legal framework, and collaboration among all stakeholders, the success of this initiative becomes feasible.

In this study, a 10-member focus group was selected. The group's consolidated opinions were used as the benchmark, and the content validity ratio (CVR) was calculated for each item. As stated earlier, the focus group consisted of university professors and experts with academic research experience. The minimum acceptable threshold for the content validity ratio for each construct is presented in Table 8. Accordingly, the overall CVI (Content Validity Index) and CVR for the proposed model were calculated as 0.78 and 0.73, respectively, in relation to the constructs of the educational voucher scheme implementation model in Iraq.

Table 6. Content Validity Ratio (CVR) for the Proposed Educational Voucher Model

Main Theme	Sub-theme	Agreement Coefficient	Approval Status
Barriers	Structural Challenges	0.80	Approved
	Economic Challenges	0.76	Approved
	Legal Challenges	0.52	Approved
	Cultural and Social Challenges	0.59	Approved
	Private Sector Challenges	0.52	Approved
	Design and Implementation Challenges	0.65	Approved
	Infrastructure Challenges	0.58	Approved
Facilitators	Internal Factors in Education	0.72	Approved
	External Factors outside Education	0.67	Approved
Feasibility	Required Infrastructure	0.63	Approved
	Economic Conditions	0.76	Approved
	Socio-Cultural Conditions	0.83	Approved



Strategies	Legal and Managerial Conditions	0.65	Approved
	School-related Conditions	0.71	Approved
	Other Conditions	0.63	Approved
	Comprehensive and Long-term Planning	0.83	Approved
	Infrastructure Development	0.69	Approved
	Equitable Distribution of Vouchers	0.71	Approved
	Monitoring School Quality	0.60	Approved
	Stakeholder Participation	0.67	Approved
	Gradual Implementation	0.71	Approved
	Flexibility in Implementation	0.72	Approved

Table 7. Content Validity Index (CVI) for the Proposed Educational Voucher Model

Main Theme	Sub-theme	CVI	Approval Status
Barriers	Structural Challenges	0.82	Approved
	Economic Challenges	0.85	Approved
	Legal Challenges	0.80	Approved
	Cultural and Social Challenges	0.91	Approved
	Private Sector Challenges	0.94	Approved
	Design and Implementation Challenges	0.95	Approved
	Infrastructure Challenges	0.79	Approved
Facilitators	Internal Factors in Education	0.87	Approved
	External Factors outside Education	0.94	Approved
Feasibility	Required Infrastructure	0.85	Approved
	Economic Conditions	0.96	Approved
	Socio-Cultural Conditions	0.89	Approved
	Legal and Managerial Conditions	0.88	Approved
	School-related Conditions	0.83	Approved
	Other Conditions	0.97	Approved
	Comprehensive and Long-term Planning	0.88	Approved
Strategies	Infrastructure Development	0.82	Approved
	Equitable Distribution of Vouchers	0.87	Approved
	Monitoring School Quality	0.86	Approved
	Stakeholder Participation	0.89	Approved
	Gradual Implementation	0.83	Approved
	Flexibility in Implementation	0.82	Approved

Therefore, based on the content validity ranking, the constructs of the implementation model for the educational voucher scheme in Iraq possess sufficient validity.

To evaluate the proposed questions, structural equation modeling (SEM) using the partial least squares (PLS) approach was employed through Smart PLS 3 software.

The standardized factor loadings and T-values between all constructs and their corresponding latent variables are presented in Figures 1 and 2, as well as in Table 8. The threshold for acceptable factor loading coefficients is 0.40. If the factor loading is below 0.40, the item must be revised or removed from the research model.

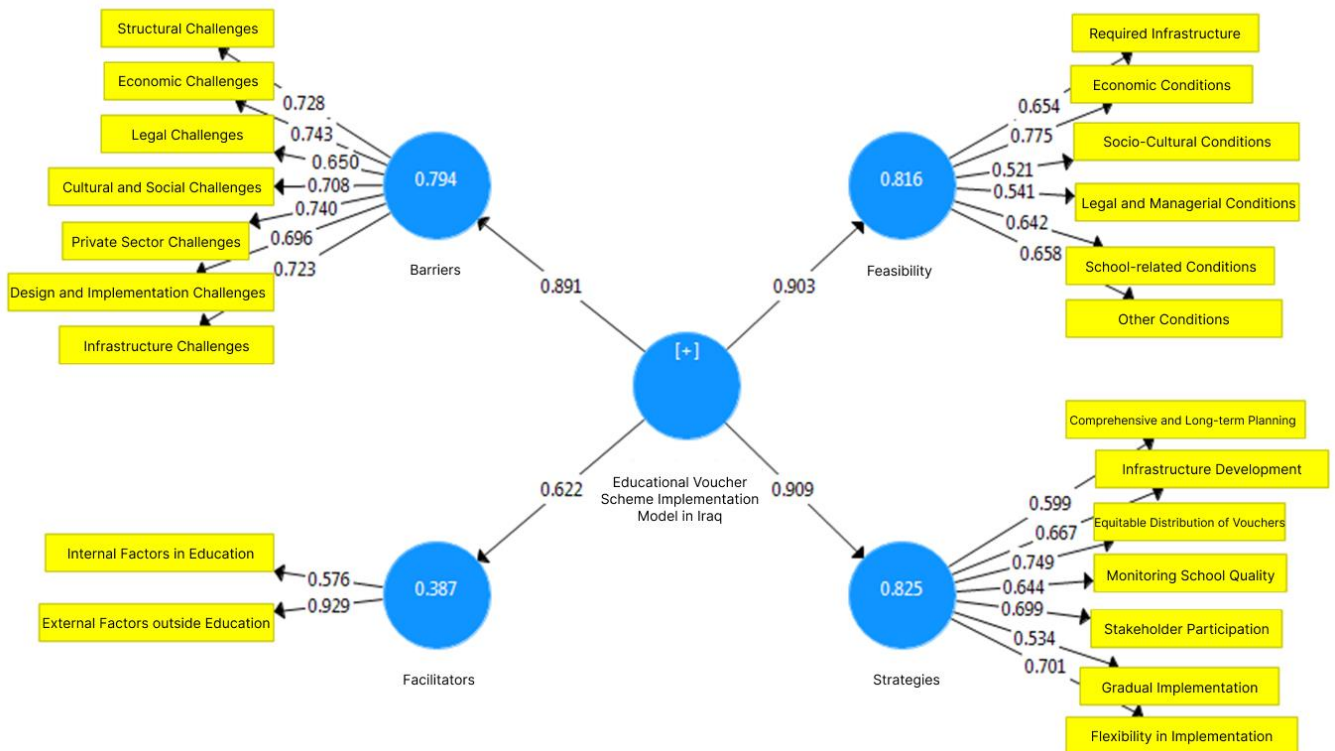


Figure 1. Standardized Factor Loadings between Latent Variables and Corresponding Indicators in the Model for Implementing the Educational Voucher Scheme in Iraq

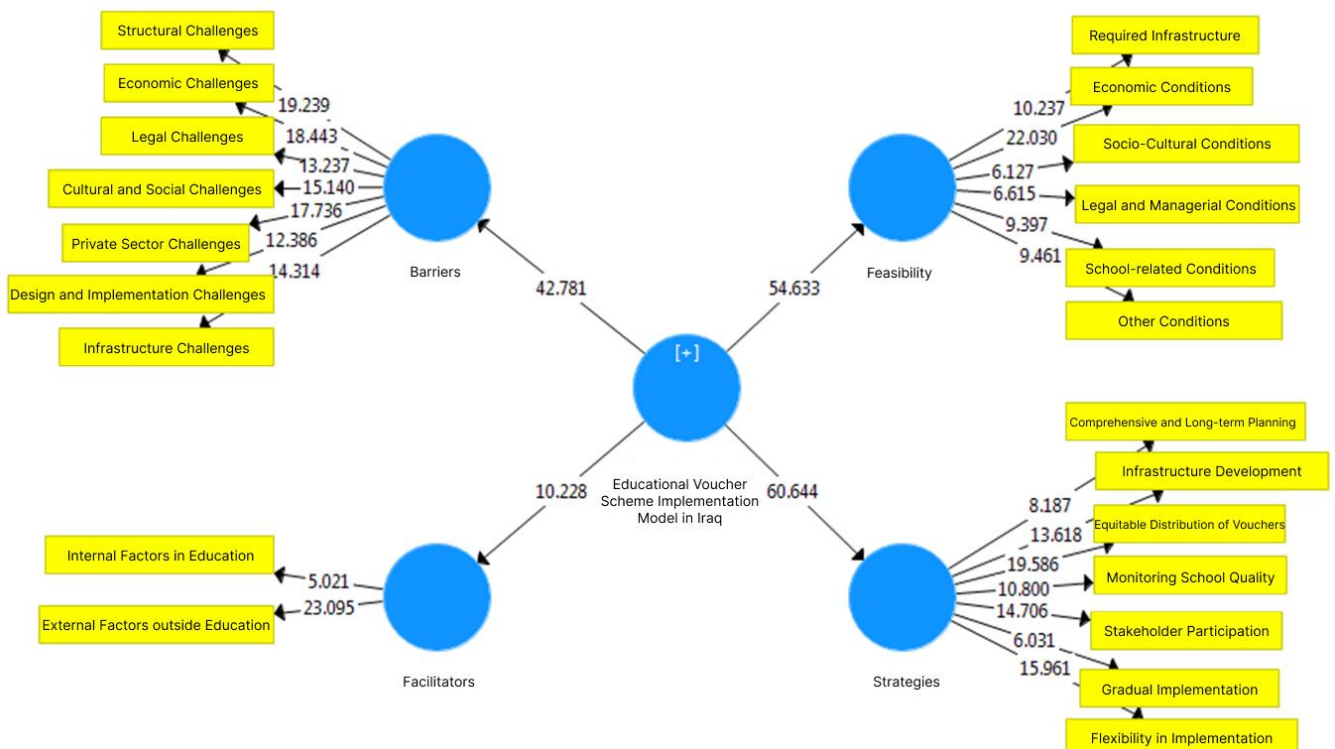


Figure 2. T-values between Latent Variables and Corresponding Indicators in the Model for Implementing the Educational Voucher Scheme in Iraq

Table 8. Standardized Factor Loadings and T-values between Latent Variables and Corresponding Indicators in the Model for Implementing the Educational Voucher Scheme in Iraq

Indicator	Beta Coefficient	T-Statistic	Significance Level
Barriers ← Structural Challenges	0.728	19.239	0.001
Barriers ← Economic Challenges	0.743	18.443	0.001
Barriers ← Legal Challenges	0.650	13.234	0.001
Barriers ← Cultural and Social Challenges	0.708	15.140	0.001
Barriers ← Private Sector Challenges	0.740	17.736	0.001
Barriers ← Design and Implementation Challenges	0.696	12.386	0.001
Barriers ← Infrastructure Challenges	0.723	14.314	0.001
Facilitators ← Internal Factors in Education	0.576	5.021	0.001
Facilitators ← External Factors outside Education	0.929	23.095	0.001
Feasibility ← Required Infrastructure	0.654	10.237	0.001
Feasibility ← Economic Conditions	0.775	22.030	0.001
Feasibility ← Socio-Cultural Conditions	0.521	6.127	0.001
Feasibility ← Legal and Managerial Conditions	0.541	6.615	0.001
Feasibility ← School-related Conditions	0.642	9.397	0.001
Feasibility ← Other Conditions	0.658	9.461	0.001
Strategies ← Comprehensive and Long-term Planning	0.599	8.187	0.001
Strategies ← Infrastructure Development	0.667	13.618	0.001
Strategies ← Equitable Distribution of Vouchers	0.749	19.586	0.001
Strategies ← Monitoring School Quality	0.644	10.800	0.001
Strategies ← Stakeholder Participation	0.699	14.706	0.001
Strategies ← Gradual Implementation	0.534	6.031	0.001
Strategies ← Flexibility in Implementation	0.701	15.961	0.001

Based on the results obtained from the standardized factor loadings and T-values between the latent variables and their corresponding indicators presented in Figures 1 and 2 and Table 8, all indicators related to this model meet the required threshold, and the research model demonstrates an acceptable level of goodness-of-fit.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The implementation of the educational voucher scheme in Iraq's education system, as an innovative and effective strategy for improving educational quality and expanding access to education, requires a comprehensive and multidimensional assessment. Based on the analyses conducted in this study, several challenges have been identified as major barriers, including structural, economic, legal, cultural, and social challenges. These challenges highlight issues such as legal instability, concentration of power within the government, economic inequalities, and cultural resistance to change.

Nevertheless, the presence of facilitators such as demand for diversification in education, the emergence of healthy competition among schools, and the need for high-quality education can ease the implementation process of this scheme. Additionally, factors such as legal support, parental and teacher involvement, and the development of necessary infrastructure are among the key elements for ensuring the success of this initiative. In this regard, implementation strategies should include the development of a comprehensive and long-term plan, establishment of robust information infrastructure, equitable distribution of vouchers, and supervision of school quality, all of which must be executed through the cooperation of all stakeholders.

A gradual implementation process and readiness for adaptation to changing conditions will also contribute to the sustainability and success of this program. With the provision of appropriate infrastructure, allocation of sufficient funding, and creation of a supportive legal framework, the feasibility of successful implementation of the educational voucher scheme in Iraq is attainable. This scheme has the potential to transform the national education system and contribute to the realization of educational equity and quality improvement. However, addressing existing challenges and fostering synergy throughout the implementation process are essential for achieving the desired outcomes.

The implementation of educational vouchers in Iraq, as a strategy to enhance access to and quality of education, necessitates a thorough and context-sensitive evaluation of the country's economic, social, and institutional conditions. Empirical evidence from similar programs in developing countries such as Colombia and Pakistan indicates their success in increasing enrollment

in private schools and improving educational equity among low-income groups (Morgan et al., 2015). These findings underscore the potential of educational vouchers to expand access to quality education, particularly for disadvantaged students and those in underprivileged areas (Srivastava & Walford, 2016; Twinomuhwezi & Herman, 2020).

However, the risk of socioeconomic segregation and the emergence of stratified educational systems remains a major challenge that must be carefully considered (Wilson & Bridge, 2019). Research suggests that school selection based on income and accessibility may exacerbate social inequalities. Therefore, successful implementation of educational vouchers in Iraq requires the establishment of strong and effective commitments between public and private sectors, the presence of a robust legal framework, and the development of effective management strategies focusing on transparency and accountability (Ngabo et al., 2014; Patrinos, 2013).

Moreover, optimizing resource allocation and establishing specialized units for program management can enhance implementation efficiency. These units would be responsible for overseeing policy execution, evaluating outcomes, and ensuring process transparency (Farquharson & Yescombe, 2011).

It is also crucial that educational voucher programs be tailored to local needs and carefully designed to produce optimal positive effects on Iraq's education system. As a result, if Iraq can overcome its current economic and social challenges and benefit from successful global experiences, the creation of an effective and sustainable educational voucher system in the country will be feasible. Ultimately, such a system can serve as a tool for reducing educational inequalities and ensuring equal access to learning opportunities for all students.

Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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