



Research Article



A Proposed Practical Model for Implementing Digital Change Management in Private Schools in Kirkuk Governorate

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Abstract: The study aimed to design a proposed practical model for implementing digital change management in private schools by diagnosing digital transformation and the challenges facing human resources in private schools in Kirkuk Governorate while processing their transactions through the government's Ur digital platform, as well as in light of the Iraqi Ministry of Education's orientation toward digitalization processes. Accordingly, the researcher adopted the case study approach as the research method in order to provide a comprehensive overview of the contents of this concept. Furthermore, the study aimed to identify the requirements through which a proposed practical model for implementing this concept in private schools in Kirkuk Governorate could be designed. The researcher reached a set of conclusions, the most prominent of which is that the practice of digital change management in private schools enables them to develop educational services as a result of changes in the organization's work structure and the availability of technological technologies within its internal environment.

In light of these conclusions, a set of recommendations was presented, the most prominent of which is the necessity of specifying a time frame for implementing digital change management in private schools in order to facilitate the evaluation process and provide an opportunity to present proposals that contribute to improvement and development.

Keywords: Digital Change Management, Private Schools in Kirkuk Governorate

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Introduction

The technological challenges faced by organizations in general as a result of developments in the field of digitalization have compelled them to undertake measures that enable them to adapt to these changes in order to ensure their continued ability to keep pace with emerging developments and address existing challenges. This development has contributed to the organization of work, data storage, the facilitation of task completion, and the effective communication of information across administrative levels. It has also enabled accurate data analysis and, consequently, the possibility of making effective decisions that enable the organization to achieve its objectives [1].

Therefore, when organizations seek to pursue digital change, they encounter a number of challenges, including employee resistance to change, as well as the need to identify administrative competencies capable of planning and implementing the change process. Accordingly, the change process is not a simple one and requires effective management that enables the organization to transition from existing systems to new ones. Given that the adoption of modern technologies requires a high level of competence and effectiveness, the concept of digital change management has emerged as being of great importance in the change process. This concept addresses the challenges faced by organizations related to human resources, from which resistance to the planned organizational change may arise, in addition to addressing the planning and implementation of the digital transformation process, for which the necessary tools must be provided prior to implementation [2].

Therefore, there has been a need to study this concept, attempt to benefit from its implications, and identify the means through which it can be applied in private schools in Kirkuk Governorate as a first step toward achieving digital change in other private educational institutions and providing educational services in line with technological developments in the modern era. Accordingly, the significance of the study lies in understanding how the concept of digital change management can be applied in private schools by presenting a proposed model for implementing the stages of change therein. The study was divided into three sections: the first section addressed the general framework of the research, the second section addressed the theoretical framework, while the third section was devoted to the proposed model, in addition to presenting the most important findings and recommendations [3].

Methodology

General Framework of the Research

First: Research Problem:

The technological development taking place in the environment of Iraqi organizations in general, and in the environment of private schools in Iraq in particular, along with the orientation of the Iraqi Ministry of Education and other government entities with which these schools interact toward digital transformation in conducting business and providing services, has compelled private schools to keep pace with digital transformation. The Ministry of Education has begun implementing this transformation gradually by processing applications for granting establishment licenses to private schools in Iraq and renewing their licenses through the government's Ur digital platform.

Following interviews with several founders of these schools in Kirkuk Governorate and an analysis of the complaints submitted to the Private and Foreign Education Division of the General Directorate of Education in Kirkuk, it became evident that they face numerous challenges due to the limited knowledge of the administrations of these schools in the fields of digitalization and technology. These procedures were not carried out with any training of the schools' members regarding modern technologies. Some signs of a resistance to change were seen in some members, whose actions started to show resistance to change and failure to adapt to the changed procedures. This led to delays in tasks to be completed within the designated time, and problems in handling changes in tasks completed in relation to administrative procedures.

From this perspective, a need was felt to focus on the concept of digital change management

and the possibility of its application in the private schools in Kirkuk Governorate, in order to work on a comprehensive model for digital change management in these schools to overcome the problems facing them, especially in the context of the Ministry of Education's efforts to reach digital transformation and try to complete tasks electronically. Based on this, the research problem was stated as:

1. What are the implications of the concept of digital change management?
2. What are the requirements for designing a model through which the concept of digital change management can be applied in private schools in Kirkuk Governorate?

Second: Significance of the Research

The importance of the research is based on the attempt to develop a model that would allow private schools to adopt digital transformation in their activities and manage digital change based on scientific frameworks. Accordingly, the significance of the research lies in the importance of the investigated variable and the extent to which it can be utilized in the field under study. This opens new avenues for conducting field studies on the possibility of applying it in other private schools in Kirkuk Governorate and other Iraqi governorates, particularly in light of the global trend toward digitalization, in a manner that enables these schools to emulate administrative orientations toward the change process.

Third: Research Objectives

In light of the questions raised in the research problem, the study seeks to achieve several objectives, as follows:

1. To study the contents of digital change management and identify its applicability.
2. To identify the main requirements of the proposed model based on the theoretical literature.

Fourth: Description of the Research Field

Private schools are defined as schools owned by non-governmental individuals, whose establishment orders are issued by the Ministry of Education in accordance with the laws and regulations in force within the Ministry. These schools provide educational services to students and pupils in return for financial fees, while being subject to the supervision of the higher authorities. The number of private schools in Kirkuk Governorate is **163 schools**.

Fifth: Research Method and Data Collection Instruments

The researcher used the case study method in the Kirkuk Governorate because it is a method that helps in analyzing the research problem in detail and comprehensively to understand the nature of the problem. Therefore, the researcher did not develop research hypotheses to analyse the phenomenon studied. The researcher personally interviewed the founders of these schools with the aim of obtaining the data, which are analyzed to come up with the findings.

Sixth: Research Boundaries

To define the scope of the study, its boundaries were divided into three categories:

1. **Geographical Boundaries:** The study was conducted in Kirkuk Governorate, Iraq.
2. **Temporal Boundaries:** The research was conducted over a period of nine months, from December 2025 to August 2026.
3. **Subject Boundaries:** The study was limited to presenting a proposed model for implementing digital change management in private schools in Kirkuk Governorate.

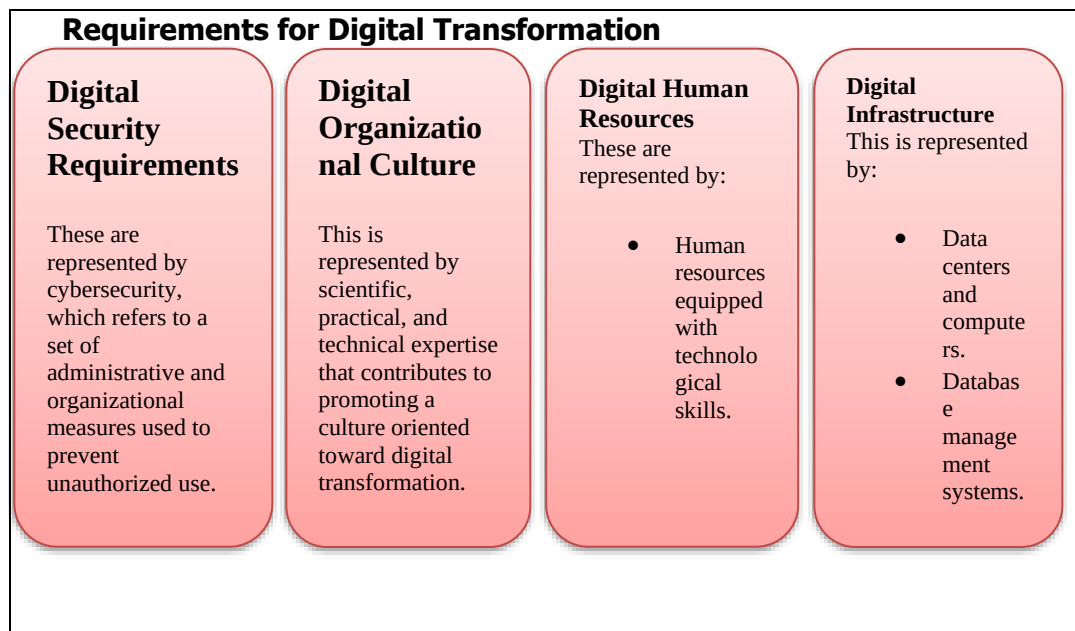
Results

Theoretical Framework

There are multiple reasons for the change towards digital transformation in any organization, such as solving the existing problems and organizations' desire to move forward and excel. This is the foundation of logical thinking, the key to organizational success. The cause of change can also be an external catalyst that forces change, for example, government regulations and legislation that mandate that certain organizations make a change, following a defined process. Since the process of digital change management is carried out via human resources, it is essential to also consider and communicate a broad overview of the content of the change management process and make the concepts associated with it understandable, as described in the following sections [4]:

First: Digital Transformation

Digital transformation, as one of the modern concepts of the 21st century, is seen as one of the



concepts that appeared in the last century. Its operation in business organizations started with the advent of the computer and the process digitalization, which was the first phase of the conversion of analog information to digital formats to enable the storage and retrieval of information [5].

In a broad sense, Digital transformation is defined as the use of digital technologies in multiple areas of administrative activities and in business and the connection of interaction points between all business activities through a single platform, which brings a radical change in the nature of the organization's work [6].

This involves various changes, which need to be managed and supervised, due to digital technologies. If the appropriate change management model is not used, digital transformation can fail to take off, especially if the leaders don't make managers understand the urgency and value of change, which could hinder managers' commitment to alignment with the change process [7].

Digitalization and introducing modern tools are not the only aspects of digital transformation; it also involves changes in administration activities. In the process, part of the traditional administration system is being gradually replaced by automation of administrative processes, which improves the decision-making process, facilitates access to public services and saves time and effort in administrative procedures [8].

The success of the digital transformation process is associated with how digital risks are managed, in addition to managing the risks generated by the digital transformation process. The leader must assume responsibility for addressing the risks faced by the organization. In order to achieve digital transformation, a set of requirements must be fulfilled, as explained by Dekroury and illustrated in Figure (1) below

Figure (1): Requirements for Digital Transformation

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the study by (Dekroury et al., 2025: 5–6).

Second: Digital Change Management

This concept is considered one of the emerging topics in the technological landscape. In previous years, it was part of the field of digitalization, represented by changing traditional data formats so that they could be stored in digital formats. Given the operational constraints faced by organizations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations were required to identify alternative approaches, either by redesigning their processes or investing in new technologies to facilitate remote work and achieve their goals and aspirations [9].

As advanced digital tools have brought about a radical transformation in organizational practices

and have significantly increased stakeholders' expectations regarding technological success, the digital change process has witnessed growing demand as a result of these expectations. Given the continued advancement of technology, organizations are currently facing increasing pressure to adopt these digital tools and move toward digital transformation in order to achieve competitiveness and flexibility [10]. This requires the strategic implementation of an appropriate change management model. To achieve this, the innovative and adaptive nature of the organizational culture must be strategically enhanced, the necessary training must be provided to employees to enable them to adapt, and technology must be integrated into operational procedures [11].

This concept is defined as a multifaceted process based on a strategic approach to achieving digital transformation in organizations effectively. It takes into account aspects related to digital transformation management and change resistance management, in addition to empowering employees and raising cultural awareness among them regarding the importance of digital transformations [12]. Accordingly, digital change management in technology-dependent environments involves structured processes aimed at transforming operations, culture, and strategy. Therefore, it requires modifying employees' culture and behavior toward the change process [13].

Third: The Importance of Digital Change Management

In the current era, digital change management has gained increasing importance as a result of the technological developments taking place in the environment and the orientation of many organizations toward digitalization in order to facilitate task completion, facilitate communication with stakeholders, reduce time, and streamline administrative work. The importance of digital change management is highlighted by [14], [15] as follows:

1. Organizations are encouraged to innovate in the field of information technology to support operations and develop products and services. The orientation toward digital transformation is beneficial for improving competitiveness and reengineering business processes related to digital products and services by prioritizing synergy and cooperation with other organizations.
2. The importance of digital change management arises from the urgent need for adaptive strategies that enable organizations to respond effectively to external shocks, technological changes, and changing consumer expectations, making digital change management a critical factor in organizational success.
3. The importance of digital change management stems from the importance of change, which is an inherent aspect of organizational development and a fundamental driver for maintaining competitiveness in dynamic markets.
4. The importance of digital change management is evident in its contribution to strategic rethinking, whereby the organization formulates its future vision of the state it expects to achieve through digital transformation, which must be aligned with the organization's goals and mission.

Fourth: Stages of the Change Process

The change process refers to the transition from a current stage to a transitional stage, ultimately reaching a future stage. This process may occur for reasons related to the organization's internal or external environment [16]. The process may be continuous and gradual, or it may be radical. It may also be a pre-planned process or a rapid and immediate process, and it may take place for reasons related to the external or internal environment [17]. In organizations, the process begins with recognizing the organizational problem and identifying the necessary procedures to address it, followed by implementing these procedures in an optimal manner to achieve success [18]. This requires a comprehensive process that includes organization, training, coordination, and control in order to restructure the organization's operations in accordance with the change process [19]. Sour indicated that the change process consists of three stages:

- **Diagnosis and Planning Stage:** This stage involves identifying the reasons for change, the types of changes to be implemented, the parties involved in the change process, the objectives of change, potential risks, and the structure of the team

responsible for the change. This step constitutes an effort to determine the scope of change, which contributes to identifying the most important tools.

- **Tools Stage:** This stage is concerned with implementing communication and training initiatives and managing resistance to change. These types of procedures are implemented after they have been previously diagnosed.
- **Evaluation Stage:** This stage is concerned with reviewing the outcomes resulting from the change management procedures implemented during the tools stage. It is necessary to measure the outcomes of change management procedures to determine whether the beneficiaries of the change have been informed, committed, and engaged in the change project. It is also necessary to evaluate changes among individuals and developments in activities to determine whether the project's initial objectives have been achieved.

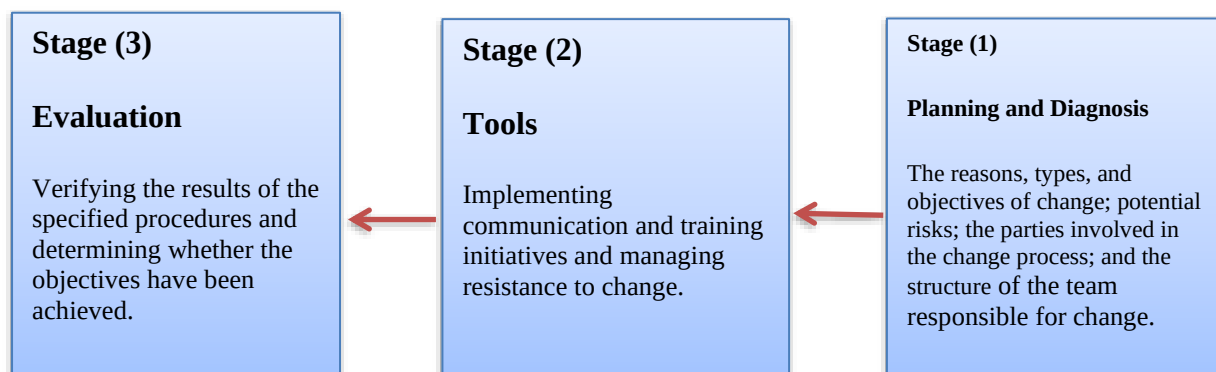


Figure (2): Stages of the Change Process

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on Sour.

Fifth: Challenges Facing Digital Change Management

Given the rapid development of modern technology, employees may not be fully informed about new developments, as their awareness of modern technologies is generally limited to what satisfies their needs. Therefore, attempts by organizations to implement digital changes may generate anxiety and uncertainty among employees and lead to significant psychological complications. This is further reinforced by fears of job replacement, loss of control and empowerment, and the lack of digital literacy among individuals, which may result in feelings of frustration regarding digital innovations and lead them to resist change .

In this regard, Sour indicated that the most prominent challenges facing digital change management, in addition to individual resistance to change, are uncertainty and ambiguity. The rapid pace of technological developments makes it difficult to predict the future impact of digital changes. Moreover, the rapid evolution of digital technologies represents another challenge for organizations, as this acceleration in technological development means that what is considered advanced today may become obsolete within a short period.

Another challenge is the limited availability of resources, which may hinder digital transformation efforts. The adoption of new technologies requires financial investment, time, and expertise. Furthermore, the lack of digital literacy among employees represents a major challenge to the digital change process, as many employees do not possess the skills necessary to use new digital tools and technologies effectively.

Yildirim and Ovaı further noted that a management approach and appropriate strategies should be designed to achieve the adaptation of human resources to digital transformation. This requires management to implement organizational changes that include both reactive and proactive responses to environmental changes, such as technological, political, and economic changes, among others. This is intended to achieve a broader transformation, the success of which requires a shared structure accepted across all organizational functions, in addition to developing internal competencies to achieve a sustainable competitive advantage. Digital competencies help organizations develop technology-based business models, use resources efficiently, effectively, and flexibly, differentiate customer experiences, and innovate new products and services.

Figure (3) illustrates the most prominent challenges of digital change management.



Figure (3): The Most Prominent Challenges of Digital Change Management

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the aforementioned sources.

Discussion

Practical Aspect

The Proposed Model

Based on the concepts presented, including the concepts of digital transformation and digital change management, their importance, stages, and challenges, the need has emerged to present a proposed model for implementing digital change management in private schools in Kirkuk Governorate. This model is presented through the following sections:

First: Vision of the Proposed Model

The vision is to implement digital change management in the administrations of private schools in Kirkuk Governorate by establishing mechanisms that facilitate the digital transformation process in these schools [20].

Second: Mission of the Proposed Model

The mission is to keep pace with technological developments, enable private school administrations to adapt to environmental changes, enhance human resource skills, and promote a culture of innovation in order to improve the quality of the educational process.

Third: Objectives of the Proposed Model

1. Enhancing the quality of educational services provided by the administrations of private schools in Kirkuk Governorate.
2. Facilitating the completion of transactions and reducing the time and effort required for administrative work.
3. Addressing the challenges facing private schools in Kirkuk Governorate.

Fourth: Challenges Facing the Organizations under Study

After conducting interviews with a random sample that included a number of private school principals and founders, in addition to analyzing the contents of a number of complaints submitted to the Private and Foreign Education Division of the General Directorate of Education in Kirkuk, in order to collect the necessary data for developing a comprehensive understanding

of the design of a model for implementing digital change management in schools in Kirkuk Governorate, the researcher identified a number of challenges:

1. A shortage of qualified personnel capable of implementing the digital transformation process due to the limited digital skills of the administrations of these schools.
2. Limited financial resources in some newly established private schools.
3. Continuous updates to electronic platforms result in delays in completing transactions, as updating these platforms requires new procedures.
4. Weak change-oriented culture among employees in private schools.

Fifth: The Practical Model for Implementing Digital Change Management in Private Schools

There are three elements of the design of any system that is implemented in an organization: inputs to the system, processes carried out by the system, and outputs from the system. The input to the proposed model will thus be a preparatory phase that should include an integrated vision to lay groundwork within the organizations studied that is conducive and prepared to implement digital change management. This will then be followed by the implementation stage to identify implementation mechanisms, support and assistance and the stages will be followed by ongoing review and evaluation [21].

Preparatory Stage

Before commencing the process of implementing digital change management in private schools in Kirkuk Governorate, a preparatory stage must be established consisting of two steps:

Step One: Identifying the Basic Requirements for Implementing the Proposed Model

In addition to the personal interview method, the researcher also examined the content of the private sector's complaints and found the main requirements for the development of the proposed model according to the study of KARAKUŞ & YALÇIN which stated that employees need to be provided with training that helps them adapt to procedures and the study by Dekroury which revealed the requirements of digital infrastructure. Based on these considerations the following needs were identified:

1. **Human Requirements:** These refer to the availability of competent and qualified individuals capable of implementing digital transformation in private schools and addressing the challenges and obstacles associated with implementing digital change management.
2. **Material Requirements:** Financial resources must be available to enable private schools to spend on purchasing modern technological resources. These include cash liquidity, bank accounts, and short-term investments that can be easily converted into cash.
3. **Systems and Instructions:** Within the proposed model, these refer to the government laws and instructions issued by the Ministry of Education that determine the nature of the operations of private schools.

Step Two: Preparation and Readiness

Given the Iraqi Ministry of Education's orientation toward digital transformation in processing transactions related to the establishment of private schools, schools, kindergartens, and private remedial course institutes through the government's Ur Gateway platform on the Internet, this orientation is still in its early stages. In order to prepare and ensure readiness for implementing digital change management, a number of steps are required. These were identified based on (Yildirim & Ovaci, 2022: 608), (Sour, 2023: 31–35), (Mbarek, 2024: 5), and (KARAKUŞ & YALÇIN, 2024: 358). The aforementioned studies indicated various requirements that must be prepared for the implementation of digital change management, as follows:

1. Fulfilling the requirements of digital transformation.
2. Training individuals on modern systems and technologies.
3. Developing a strategy for implementing digital change management in private schools, specifying the objectives to be achieved, the practical implementation steps, and the evaluation of what has been implemented.
4. Strengthening values that encourage keeping pace with development, such as continuous learning and acceptance of new ideas.

5. Determining the financial costs resulting from implementing digital change management in private schools.

Second Stage: Implementation Stage

Step One: Identifying the Basic Implementation Mechanisms

The process of implementing digital change management in private schools is not without challenges, as the change process may face resistance from stakeholders. In addition, limited resources may constitute an obstacle to the digital change management process. Therefore, basic mechanisms for implementing the change process must be established to ensure that it proceeds smoothly and without obstacles. To achieve this, a number of procedures are required, which were identified based on the studies of (Mazhar, 2024: 21–22), (Sour, 2023: 31–35), (Mbarek, 2024: 5), (Susilowati, 2025: 13), and (Laura, 2026: 137), as follows:

1. Establishing the vision, mission, and objectives to be achieved when implementing the digital change management process.
2. Determining the timeframe for implementing the digital change process in private schools.
3. Establishing a specialized team responsible for providing regular training to individuals on new digital technologies.
4. Providing financial incentives to the administrations of private schools to encourage them to implement the digital change management process.
5. Promoting a culture of change within private schools in order to sustain the change process associated with digital development.

Step Two: Identifying Supporting Mechanisms

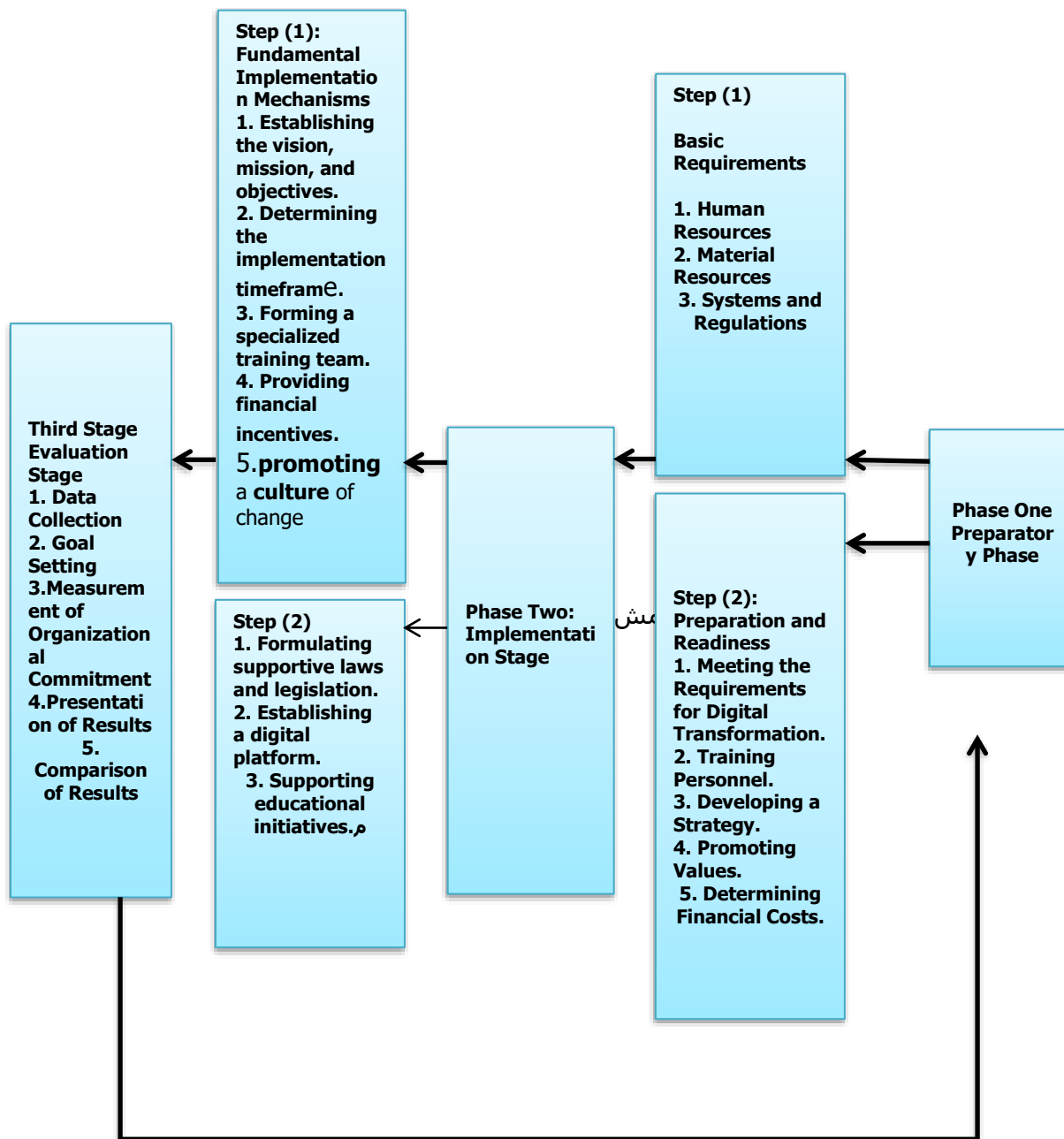
1. Private schools are currently required to comply with the Private and Foreign Education Instructions No. (5) of 2013, issued by the Ministry of Education. Given the high cost of technological devices and equipment, legislation and laws should be formulated within the state's general budget to support private schools in purchasing the devices and equipment necessary to establish digital platforms, record video lessons, and purchase smart boards.
2. Establishing a digital platform in each governorate to communicate with the administrations of private schools, including the provision of advisory services, guidance, and follow-up in order to facilitate procedures.
3. Supporting educational initiatives through digital platforms while involving students' parents in providing opinions and suggestions, which can be studied and used as a basis for developing recommendations.

Third Stage: Evaluation Stage

Evaluating the results after implementing digital change management in private schools is of great importance due to its role in identifying strengths and weaknesses, determining the suitability of the strategy developed for the implementation process, and undertaking corrective measures to adjust the strategic direction in order to ensure continuous improvement in performance. The evaluation process should include a set of procedures, as presented below:

1. Collecting and analyzing the data necessary for the evaluation process.
2. Identifying the objectives that have been achieved and those that have not been achieved in order to determine the performance gap.
3. Determining the extent to which private schools comply with the directives of the higher authorities.
4. Presenting the results related to the evaluation process.
5. Comparing the results before and after implementing digital change management.

Based on the foregoing, **Figure (4)** below represents the proposed practical model for implementing digital change management in private schools in Kirkuk Governorate.



Reverse Nutrition

Figure (4): The Proposed Practical Model for Implementing Digital Change Management in Private Schools in Kirkuk Governorate

Source: Prepared by the Researcher

Conclusions

Digital change management is a modern concept, as it is associated with human resources and the methods of persuading them to adopt and learn modern technologies. The implementation of digital change management in private schools can accelerate the processing of transactions related to the issuance and renewal of establishment licenses, while reducing the time and effort required to complete tasks. The implementation of digital change management in private schools can enable them to improve educational services as a result of changes in the organizational structure and the availability of technological tools within their internal environment. The implementation of digital change management must follow specific steps and be preceded by the preparation of the basic requirements for implementation. Government support for private schools is essential to encourage them to

implement the change process accurately. Based on the findings of the study, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has been recommended to begin digital change management in private schools, followed by the introduction of digital change management in public schools, with the aim of making it easier to complete tasks and implement the required changes in public schools' organizational structures, as per the needs of technological advancement in today's era. Communication technologies should be reinforced during the implementation process of digital change management and should be supported by school administrations.

The Ministry of Education should encourage and coordinate with departments such as tax authorities, civil defense departments, and social security institutions and inform them about the mechanisms of digital transformation and digital change management in the private sector in order to improve cooperation. It is recommended that a time frame should be set for the digital change management implementation in private schools in order to enable the evaluation process and offer a chance to put forward recommendations that will support improvement and development. Future changes should be promoted with a culture of change to minimize individual resistance to change that may be required to adopt new technologies.

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