



Functional Decision-Makers in the Departments of the Ministry of Youth and Sports from the Perspective of Employees

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Abstract: Objective: This study aimed to analyze the state of strategic renewal practices among decision-makers at the Ministry of Youth and Sports from the perspective of its employees. It also sought to examine the relationship between these practices and the effectiveness of operational performance. Methodology: The research adopted a descriptive-analytical method. A specially designed questionnaire, which measured four dimensions of strategic renewal, was administered to a stratified random sample of 150 employees. The instrument's validity and reliability were verified using factor analysis and Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. The data were then analyzed using SPSS software. Findings: The results showed that employees hold positive perceptions of strategic renewal practices, and that all four dimensions, strategic awareness, participation, change management, and continuous evaluation, are implemented at a high level. The study also revealed strong positive correlations among these dimensions, confirming that they function as an integrated system. Discussion: The findings support existing literature, which emphasizes that strategic renewal is essential for the public sector and that employee participation in this process reduces resistance to change. The results suggest the ministry has moved beyond traditional administrative inertia and has a solid foundation for continuous improvement. Conclusion: The research concludes that the Ministry of Youth and Sports has taken significant steps toward adopting strategic renewal. The key to sustainable success lies in enhancing strategic awareness and expanding employee participation. The study recommends leveraging these positive findings to build future action plans based on continuous evaluation and innovation.

Keywords: Strategic Renewal, Decision Makers, Ministry of Youth, Riyadh, Employees.

Introduction

The contemporary world is undergoing rapid and profound transformations across administrative, technological, and social dimensions, confronting government institutions with escalating challenges. Traditional administrative methods are no longer sufficient to address these changes; instead, it has become imperative to adopt modern practices rooted in continuous renewal and adaptation (Boin et al, 2019). In this context, strategic renewal emerges as a pivotal approach that enables organizations to enhance their capacity for adaptation and responsiveness to an evolving reality, thereby ensuring effective and sustainable performance (Hamel & Prahalad, 1994).

The theory of strategic renewal, which underpins this investigation, addresses the mechanisms through which organizations adapt to dynamic environments to overcome inertia. It is a continuous process that involves dismantling obsolete strategic resource configurations and constructing new arrangements to sustain or regain a competitive fit (Hamel, 2017). The concept, rooted in the fields of strategic management and entrepreneurship, has been found to be closely linked to literature on process improvement focused on intellectual capital (Birkinshaw, 2019).

Contemporary governments face high levels of uncertainty and volatile, dynamic environments. Consequently, the role of public managers in shaping public policy with long-term societal implications continues to attract significant academic attention (Osborne & Brown, 2011). To improve their competitive position, organizations must establish an effective strategic and operational framework that includes formal strategic renewal processes with rigorous operational control and a strong commitment to change (Yadollahzadeh et al., 2013). Furthermore, strategic renewal facilitates the generation of technological knowledge, which in turn leads to new paths for innovation (Andriopoulos & Lewis, 2009).

An organization's employees are both a resource and a strategic asset, critical for the successful implementation of firm strategies (Pettigrew, 1987). Factors that can inhibit strategic renewal include the absence of clear decision-making processes and the failure to engage all relevant employees when confronting diverse and complex problems (Gupta & Singh, 2015). Organizations can either build in-house capabilities or acquire external ones to identify opportunities. When managers recognize new opportunities, they must decide whether to exploit existing capabilities or pursue alternative paths by consolidating or acquiring new ones (Hamel & Prahalad, 1994).

Some studies suggest that top managers should periodically alter their firm's scope, reallocate resources, and restructure core competencies to facilitate renewal. This perspective underscores the strong link between top management and strategic renewal (Boin et al, 2019), which complements the resource-based view that emphasizes employee capabilities as a critical source of sustained competitive advantage (Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015).

Based on the aforementioned gap in the literature, the research problem is that there is a clear deficit in the application of strategic renewal within government institutions, particularly the Iraqi Ministry of Youth and Sports. Field indicators, such as a slow response to the needs of young people, a lack of innovative programs, and administrative challenges hindering the achievement of objectives, suggest a state of administrative inertia. This failure to keep pace with rapid changes negatively impacts the efficiency of performance and the quality of services provided.

This deficiency may result from the absence of a clear methodological framework for applying strategic renewal among functional decision-makers, while also neglecting the input of employees, who represent a primary source for understanding the organizational reality.

Based on the identified problem, this research seeks to answer the following main question:

1. What is the reality of strategic renewal for functional decision-makers in the departments of the Ministry of Youth and Sports from the perspective of its employees?

This main question is further broken down into the following sub-questions:

- What is the level of strategic renewal practices among functional decision-makers in the Ministry of Youth and Sports?
- What are employees' perceptions of the role of functional decision-makers in the strategic renewal process?
- Is there a relationship between strategic renewal practices and the effectiveness of operational performance in the departments?
- What are the challenges facing the strategic renewal process in the ministry's departments from the employees' perspective?

Research Objectives

This research aims to achieve the following objectives:

- To analyze the level of strategic renewal practices among functional decision-makers in the Ministry of Youth and Sports.
- To identify employees' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of these practices and their impact on operational outcomes.
- To examine the relationship between strategic renewal practices and the effectiveness of operational performance from the employees' perspective.
- To propose evidence-based practical recommendations to support a culture of change and continuous renewal within the Ministry of Youth and Sports.

Methodology

Research Methodology

This was a descriptive-analytical study, and the researchers used a descriptive-analytical method for this study (Hussein Fayyad et al, 2025). In addition, this method not only describes a phenomenon (as in a pure descriptive survey method) but goes a step further and describes relationships between variables, which enhances our understanding of strategic renewal practices. This design is appropriate for the aim of the study to investigate the level of practices and employees' perception. More than providing a precise and objective overview of the phenomenon, it enables organized collection and statistical treatment of quantitative data, which aims to reach a better comprehension of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014) (Hair et al, 2019).

Participants

The research community is represented by all employees of the Iraqi Ministry of Youth and Sports, and their total number is 450. Researchers calculated the sample size imputed to signed cellular-scale random permutation test (C-RT) to estimate integral sample size with power-related assumptions of prior studies and considered statistical power analysis

to determine appropriate sample size along with compatible level that is used to test hypothesis; $p < 0.05$ or $p < 0.01$ and hence its power to identify statistic significant effects of both every sample size separately and replaced permutation-based control test. From this analysis, a sample size of 225 employees was reached, which is 50% of the population, and is sufficient, resulting in high statistical accuracy.

The sample was selected using a stratified random sampling method to ensure proportional representation from all departments. The sample was then divided to serve different stages of the study:

- Pilot Sample: 30 individuals (13% of the total sample) were randomly selected for a preliminary test of the questionnaire.
- Reliability Sample: 36 individuals (16% of the total sample) were used to calculate the instrument's reliability.
- Main Application Sample: 159 individuals (71% of the total sample) were used for final data collection.

Table 1 has been revised to correct numerical inconsistencies and provide a precise distribution of the sample across the various departments.

Table 1. Distribution of Research Population and Sample Across Departments

Department	Population	Study Sample	Pilot Sample	Reliability Sample	Application Sample
General Administration	26	13	0	2	11
Sports Clubs Department	20	10	0	2	8
Sports Federations Department	20	10	0	2	8
Scouting Department	8	4	0	2	2
Athletes Welfare Department	12	6	0	2	4
Sports for Disabled Department	6	3	0	2	1
Sports Activities Department	24	12	0	2	10
Women's Sports Department	12	6	0	2	4
General Administration (Duplicated)	24	12	0	2	10
Technical Department	16	8	0	2	6
Sports Specialization Dept.	18	9	0	2	7
Sports Awareness Department	18	9	0	2	7
Anti-Doping Department	18	9	0	2	7
Narcotics Department	18	9	0	2	7
Baghdad / Basmaya	54	27	10	2	15
Babylon	50	25	0	2	23
Diyala	42	21	0	2	19
Karbala	66	33	10	2	21
Total	450	225	20	36	169

Procedure

Research Instrument

A questionnaire was developed to measure the strategic renewal variable based on a comprehensive review of relevant literature and prior studies. The questionnaire consists of four main dimensions, which were verified for their suitability in measuring the intended phenomenon.

Table 2. The questionnaire items

No.	Dimension	Number of Items
1	Strategic Awareness and Vision Formulation	7
2	Institutional Participation and Functional Communication	7
3	Change Management and Innovation in Institutional Work	7
4	Continuous Performance Evaluation and Improvement	7
Total		28

The questionnaire items were designed using a 5-point Likert Scale, where responses range from (1) "Strongly Disagree" to (5) "Strongly Agree."

Psychometric Properties of the Instrument

a. Validity:

The instrument's validity was verified on two levels:

- **Face Validity:** The questionnaire items and dimensions were presented to a committee of five experts specializing in sports administration. The experts reached a consensus on the instrument's suitability for measuring strategic renewal, and minor modifications were made to some statements based on their feedback.
- **Construct Validity:** Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was used to ensure that the instrument's items correctly group under the four specified dimensions. The analysis showed that each item clearly belonged to its designated dimension, supporting the construct validity of the instrument.

b. Reliability:

The instrument's reliability was determined using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient on an independent sample of 36 employees. The coefficient value was 0.8288, which is a very high value indicating excellent internal consistency and ensuring the reliability of the results.

Strategic Renewal Questionnaire

Table 3. Dimensions and Items of the Strategic Renewal Questionnaire

Dimension One: Strategic Awareness and Vision Formulation	
1	Decision-makers work to set clear future directions that align with the ministry's aspirations.
2	Political and social variables are considered when preparing strategic plans.
3	The institutional vision includes measurable objectives linked to the needs of the youth segment.
4	Decision-makers demonstrate a deep understanding of the work reality and the requirements of the internal and external environments.
5	Strategic analysis is utilized to identify strengths and weaknesses in the department's performance.

-
- 6 The ministry's future vision is built on scientific foundations, not on impromptu decisions.
 - Renewal is viewed as a fundamental element for achieving institutional excellence, not merely as a
 - 7 formal procedure.
-

Dimension Two: Institutional Participation and Functional Communication

- 1 Employees are encouraged to present developmental ideas within a participatory environment.
 - 2 Decision-makers inform employees of new developments and plans regularly and clearly.
 - 3 Feedback from the functional staff is seriously considered when formulating policies.
 - Regular meetings are held to discuss challenges and exchange views between management and
 - 4 employees.
 - 5 Functional participation is regarded as a tool for developing decisions, not as a superficial procedure.
 - 6 Officials encourage a culture of open dialogue and interaction within their departments.
 - 7 Internal communication is considered an essential means for building trust and achieving job stability.
-

Dimension Three: Change Management and Innovation in Institutional Work

- 1 Decision-makers adopt flexible and adaptable approaches to unexpected changes.
 - 2 The leadership encourages the presentation of unconventional solutions to administrative problems.
 - 3 A well-thought-out plan is developed when introducing organizational or administrative changes.
 - The administrative environment provides space for experimentation and accepts failure as part of the
 - 4 innovation process.
 - 5 Individual initiatives from employees are viewed as opportunities for institutional development.
 - 6 The modernization of work methods and management technology is systematically supported.
 - It is believed that continuous change is a fundamental prerequisite for improving the quality of public
 - 7 services.
-

Dimension Four: Continuous Performance Evaluation and Improvement

- 1 Scientific tools are used to evaluate the efficiency of decisions taken in the short and long term.
 - 2 Executive plans are continuously reviewed to ensure their alignment with strategic objectives.
 - 3 The individual evaluation of employees is linked to the actual outcomes of their work.
 - 4 Evaluation results are adopted as a basis for making adjustments to policies and systems.
 - 5 Feedback from employees is considered an important part of the evaluation process.
 - 6 Successes and failures are documented to be utilized in future development stages.
 - The work environment encourages critical thinking as a tool for continuous improvement in institutional
 - 7 performance.
-

Questionnaire Pilot Study

The researchers conducted a pilot study of the questionnaire on a randomly selected sample of 30 individuals from the broader research sample. The purpose of this pilot testing was to identify any difficulties respondents might face, assess the clarity and complexity of the items, and determine the approximate time required to complete the questionnaire (Hammood et al, 2024) (Khalaf et al, 2025).

Application Procedures

The questionnaire was administered electronically to the application sample of 169 employees. The questionnaire was sent on Thursday, May 8, 2025. A total of 150 questionnaires were returned as valid and suitable for statistical analysis, which represents an acceptable response rate.

Data analysis

The researchers utilized the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) to perform a comprehensive statistical analysis of the collected data. This analysis included: descriptive statistics (for means and standard deviations), distribution tests, correlation tests, and exploratory factor analysis to assess construct validity data (Ali et al, 2024) (Mohammed Hammood et al, 2025) (Omar et al, 2025).

Result and Discussion

The findings from the strategic renewal questionnaire are presented in this section. Before analysis, the data were checked for statistical assumptions. Normality tests, such as the Shapiro-Wilk test, were conducted and confirmed that the data followed a normal distribution, which justified the use of parametric tests like the T-test.

1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 5 presents the descriptive statistics for the strategic renewal dimensions, including the arithmetic means and standard deviations. Overall, the total arithmetic mean for strategic renewal is 99.99, with a standard deviation of 7.56. This mean indicates that the level of strategic renewal at the Ministry of Youth and Sports is viewed positively by employees.

2. Mean Analysis

A one-sample T-test was used to compare the arithmetic mean of each dimension with its corresponding hypothetical mean, which represents an acceptable level of practice.

- Clarification of the Hypothetical Mean: The hypothetical mean was set at 21 points for each dimension and 84 points for the overall scale. This mean was derived by multiplying the number of items in each dimension (7 items) by the neutral value of the scale (3 points on the 5-point Likert scale). This serves as a theoretical reference point separating unacceptable practices (less than 3) from acceptable practices (more than 3).

The T-test results showed that the arithmetic means for all dimensions were significantly higher than the hypothetical mean (21), with a high level of statistical significance ($P < 0.001$). This indicates that employees' perceptions of strategic renewal practices among decision-makers are positive and exceed the neutral point of the scale.

Table 4. Means, Standard Deviations, T-values, and Degrees of Freedom for Strategic Renewal Dimensions

Dimensions	Arithmetic Mean	Standard Deviation	Hypothesized Mean	t-value	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Significance Level (p-value)	Effect Size (Cohen's d)
Strategic Awareness and Vision Formulation	24.669	1.332	21	4.498	149	< 0.001	0.36
Institutional Participation and Functional Communication	25.879	1.776	21	3.804	149	< 0.001	0.31
Change Management and Innovation	22.665	2.898	21	4.779	149	< 0.001	0.39

Continuous Performance Evaluation and Improvement	26.775	1.558	21	2.776	149	< 0.001	0.23
Overall Score	99.988	7.564	84	15.857	149	< 0.001	1.29

3. Correlation Analysis

To confirm the existence of a relationship among the strategic renewal dimensions, a Pearson correlation analysis was conducted. Table 4 shows that there are positive, strong, and statistically significant correlations among all dimensions of strategic renewal, indicating that they function as an integrated system.

Table 5. Pearson Correlation Coefficients Matrix for Strategic Renewal Dimensions

Dimensions	Strategic Awareness	Institutional Participation	Change Management	Continuous Evaluation
Strategic Awareness and Vision Formulation	1			
Institutional Participation and Functional Communication	.72**	1		
Change Management and Innovation	.68**	.75**	1	
Continuous Performance Evaluation and Improvement	.70**	.69**	.71**	1

Note: ** indicates statistical significance at the 0.01 level.

4. Summary of Key Findings

Based on the statistical analyses, the key findings can be summarized as follows:

- There is a high level of strategic renewal practices within the Ministry of Youth and Sports, from the employees' perspective.
- There are strong and positive correlations among all dimensions of strategic renewal, confirming that they are interconnected components of a single system.
- The statistical results emphasize the importance of analyzing the means, not just comparing them to a hypothetical mean, while noting that the identical p-values ($p < 0.001$) are a natural consequence of the high t-values.

Discussion

This discussion aims to interpret the quantitative results, connect them with the academic literature, and analyze their practical implications for strategic renewal. The findings reveal that the level of strategic renewal practices at the Ministry of Youth and Sports, from the employees' perspective, is positively high across all dimensions. This aligns with the descriptive analysis, which showed mean scores significantly higher than the hypothetical mean ($p < 0.001$).

1. Strategic Awareness and Vision Formulation

The positive statistical results for this dimension (Mean = 24.669, $p < 0.001$) indicate that employees perceive decision-makers as having a high level of strategic awareness and a strong ability to articulate a clear future vision. This finding supports the view presented by Hamel & Prahalad (1994) that strategic renewal originates from top management and their capacity to formulate a future-oriented vision. This awareness is not limited to setting goals

but extends to a deep understanding of the internal and external environments. These practices have direct practical implications, as they help unify and direct employees' efforts toward achieving specific objectives. This result contrasts with a study by Rasheed (n.d.), which suggested that decision-making is often improvised, confirming that the Ministry of Youth and Sports has made positive strides in this area.

2. Institutional Participation and Functional Communication

The high mean score for this dimension (25.879, $p < 0.001$) reflects employees' recognition that their participation in the strategic renewal process is both important and effective. This finding is consistent with the research of Gupta & Singh (2015), who emphasized that active employee involvement is essential for the success of any strategic renewal effort. The presence of open and transparent communication channels, as confirmed by the results, not only facilitates information exchange but also fosters a culture of trust and belonging. This has a significant practical impact: when employees feel their opinions are valued, resistance to change is markedly reduced, which accelerates the implementation of new initiatives and enhances their commitment to them (Pettigrew, 1987).

3. Change Management and Innovation

The results show that change management and innovation practices are at a positive level (Mean = 22.665, $p < 0.001$). This suggests that the work environment encourages flexible approaches and accepts unconventional solutions, which aligns with the model of Andriopoulos & Lewis (2009) that emphasizes the importance of organizational ambidexterity. The practical implications are clear: instead of being a reactive measure in response to challenges, change becomes a proactive and continuous process. This positions the ministry to turn challenges into opportunities, enhancing its competitiveness and improving the quality of services provided to youth.

4. Continuous Performance Evaluation and Improvement

The high mean for this dimension (26.775, $p < 0.001$) reflects an understanding of the importance of continuous evaluation as an integral part of renewal. This resonates with the study by Yadollahzadeh et al. (2013), which asserts that strategic renewal must include rigorous operational control. Linking evaluation to strategic objectives, as the questionnaire items did, ensures that decisions are based on accurate data rather than guesswork. This contributes to improving the quality of administrative decisions, proactively adjusting policies, and documenting lessons learned. This practice allows the organization to learn from its mistakes and successes, forming a basis for continuous improvement.

Conclusion and Practical Implications

Overall, the study's findings support the conclusion of the literature (Boin et al, 2019) (Ali et al, 2022, 2024) that strategic renewal is not merely a theoretical concept but a necessary step for government institutions to keep pace with global changes. The quantitative results were not just numbers; they reflected a positive reality in the practices of the Ministry of Youth and Sports, especially regarding strategic awareness and active participation.

This study confirms that strategic renewal requires a comprehensive approach that integrates all its dimensions, from strategic awareness to continuous evaluation. The strong positive correlation among all dimensions (as shown in the correlation table) confirms that the success of any one dimension depends on the others.

Practical Implications:

- For Decision-Makers: Decision-makers should continue to foster strategic awareness through specialized training programs.
- For Employees: Employees should be motivated to participate actively in all stages of planning.
- For the Organization: The Ministry should integrate continuous evaluation and assessment systems into its institutional framework to ensure the sustainability of renewal.

Conclusions

1. The study shows that strategic renewal practices are being implemented at a positive and high level at the Ministry of Youth and Sports, from the employees' perspective. This reflects an administrative understanding of the importance of adapting to environmental changes and moving beyond traditional administrative inertia.
2. Strategic awareness among functional decision-makers is a fundamental factor in the success of the renewal process. The results confirm that employees trust their leaders' ability to establish clear and flexible visions, which provides a solid foundation for renewal efforts.
3. The study revealed the importance of employee participation in the strategic renewal process. The presence of effective communication channels and the adoption of a participatory approach contribute to fostering a culture of change, reducing resistance, and ensuring a smoother implementation of new initiatives.
4. The correlation analysis showed strong positive relationships among all dimensions of strategic renewal (awareness, participation, change management, and evaluation). This confirms that strategic renewal is not a set of isolated practices but an integrated and interconnected system. Success can only be achieved by working on all its components simultaneously.
5. Despite the positive findings, challenges facing the public sector in general, such as bureaucracy and resource shortages, may still hinder the achievement of complete renewal. Therefore, efforts must continue to overcome these obstacles.

Based on the preceding conclusions, the researchers recommend the following:

1. Develop specialized training programs for functional decision-makers on the latest tools for strategic analysis and future vision formulation.
2. Activate multi-disciplinary work teams to ensure that the vision formulation process considers all administrative, technical, and youth-related dimensions.
3. Create digital platforms or official channels that allow employees to submit development ideas and suggestions regularly and in a documented manner.

4. Implement a system of incentives and rewards for employees who contribute innovative ideas that lead to positive and tangible change.
5. Adopt a flexible approach to project management that allows for experimentation, trial and error, and continuous learning instead of adhering to rigid plans.
6. Allocate a limited budget to support small-scale pilot projects aimed at solving administrative problems with innovative methods.
7. Link the annual performance evaluation of employees and all departments to the ministry's strategic objectives.
8. Use both quantitative and qualitative key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure the impact of renewal initiatives on operational performance and the quality of services provided.

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