



ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Designing a Model for Creating a Culture of Transformation in the Government Sector with a Modern Public Service Approach (Case Study: National Iranian Oil Company)

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to design a model for creating a culture of transformation in the public sector with a modern public service approach (case study: National Iranian Oil Company). The research is applied-developmental in terms of its purpose and survey-cross-sectional in terms of data collection method and time. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 15 managers and experts of the company, using purposive sampling until theoretical saturation was reached. Qualitative data analysis was performed with ATLAS.ti software and finally 5 main categories, 25 focal categories, and 176 initial codes were extracted. Causal conditions include environmental pressures, stakeholder expectations, the need for transparency, the development of digital technologies, and reduced organizational productivity. Contextual conditions include traditional administrative structure, bureaucratic culture, employee skill level, national macro policies, and existing technological infrastructure. Intervening conditions also include employee resistance, transformational leadership, support from senior policymakers, limited financial resources, and strategic inter-organizational interactions. The suggested strategies include empowering human resources, employing new technologies, institutionalizing transparency, developing organizational learning, and strengthening transformational leadership. The outcomes include increasing efficiency, improving service quality, strengthening public trust, reducing costs, and creating a competitive advantage for the government. The results show that realizing a culture of transformation requires synergy between causal, contextual, and intervening conditions and implementing appropriate strategies with continuous monitoring of results. Implementing this model can transform the National Iranian Oil Company into an innovative, responsive organization and a model of new governance in the public sector. ©authors

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Introduction

In the public sector, organizational culture is widely recognized as a decisive factor shaping governance quality, administrative efficiency, and public service delivery (Pourmoghaddam et al., 2025; Chrispeels, 2026). However, beyond its managerial implications, organizational culture also constitutes the architecture of institutional learning spaces—the socio-material environments within which public employees interpret policies, exchange knowledge, make decisions, and construct shared meanings. Persistent challenges in public organizations, including resistance to change, bureaucratic rigidity, weak accountability, limited innovation, and slow decision-making, are not merely procedural failures; they reflect deeply institutionalized cultural patterns that shape how learning, knowledge circulation, and problem-solving occur within administrative systems. When values such as transparency, meritocracy, accountability, and service quality are weakly embedded, even well-designed policies and regulatory frameworks fail to translate into effective practice (Latupeirissa et al., 2024; Fussy, 2026).

In many countries, including Iran, prevailing governmental cultures continue to privilege hierarchy, control, and procedural compliance over agility, responsiveness, and innovation (Pham, 2025). Such cultural orientations produce closed and control-oriented organizational learning spaces, where knowledge flows vertically, experimentation is limited, and deviation from established norms is discouraged. Yet rapid environmental transformations—technological advancements, rising public awareness, increasing citizen expectations, and global regulatory pressures—have intensified the need to redesign these institutional learning environments (Arbabi Esfahani et al., 2024). Administrative reforms and digitalization efforts cannot succeed sustainably unless the underlying cultural and learning infrastructures are transformed. Without cultural reconfiguration, policies related to transparency, productivity enhancement, and e-governance are likely to face resistance, delay, or symbolic implementation (Ghofrani, 2025; Zhang et al, 2026).

Creating a culture of transformation in the public sector, therefore, entails redesigning the cognitive, behavioral, and relational foundations of organizational learning. This transformation cannot be achieved solely through structural reform or formal directives; rather, it requires the gradual reconstruction of shared beliefs, interactional norms, and epistemic practices. The starting point is fostering a collective recognition of the necessity of change—helping employees and managers understand that established routines no longer meet societal demands or technological realities (Ihyauddin et al., 2025). In this regard, targeted training, institutionalization of innovative thinking, and the creation of psychologically safe environments for experimentation are essential. When employees experience job security, managerial support, and participatory decision-making, they become active contributors to the transformation process (Parris et al., 2022). These conditions collectively reshape the organizational learning space from a compliance-driven environment into a participatory and adaptive one.

Managerial behavior further determines whether transformation becomes embedded within everyday learning practices. When senior leaders embody transparency, accountability, justice, and service orientation, these values gradually become institutionalized across the organization. The integration of digital tools, performance-based incentive systems, client-centered approaches, and strengthened internal communication networks contributes to reconfiguring the organization as a responsive and learning-oriented entity (Graessler et al., 2024). In this sense, a culture of transformation materializes when a government organization evolves from a purely executive apparatus into a distributed learning environment—an institution that interprets change as an opportunity for continuous improvement rather than as a threat.

The modern public service approach reinforces this shift by redefining the role of government from a “provider authority” to a “service-oriented, participatory, and responsive facilitator”

(Hau, 2024). In such a paradigm, organizational culture must prioritize citizen engagement, inter-organizational collaboration, innovation, transparency, and continuous learning (Nawaz et al., 2025). Employees are reconceptualized as facilitators of public value rather than as mere executors of administrative procedures. Transformational training, communication skill development, and strengthening the ethos of public responsibility become central to shaping an open and interactive learning space (Borrás et al., 2023). Furthermore, aligning incentive systems with innovation, ethical conduct, teamwork, and service quality ensures that the cultural redesign is structurally reinforced rather than rhetorically endorsed (Bagga et al., 2023).

Within this broader framework, the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), as one of the largest and most strategic public institutions, represents a critical site for examining the redesign of organizational learning spaces in the public sector (Bakhtiari et al., 2023). The proposed transformation model begins with redefining organizational identity and values—encouraging employees to recognize their role not only in energy production but also in public accountability, transparency, and national stewardship (Ajdar, 2023). The second stage emphasizes participatory mechanisms, digitalization, and multi-stakeholder collaboration, including service windows, digital governance systems, structured feedback channels, and partnerships with universities and knowledge-based firms (Masoudi et al., 2023). These mechanisms expand the boundaries of the organizational learning space and promote distributed knowledge exchange. The third stage institutionalizes transformation through restructuring governance mechanisms, implementing data-driven dashboards, strengthening knowledge management systems, and cultivating transformational leadership across managerial levels (Azimzadeh et al., 2024). Only through such systemic integration can NIOC evolve into a service-oriented, learning, and innovative public organization (Behjat, 2018; Alizadeh Majd et al., 2023).

Against this backdrop, the present study seeks to answer the following question: What is the model for creating a culture of transformation in the public sector, based on a modern public service approach, within the National Iranian Oil Company? The primary aim is to design and empirically ground a comprehensive model that links cultural transformation to the redesign of organizational learning spaces in a large-scale public institution.

The importance of designing a model for creating a culture of transformation in the government sector with a modern public service approach (Case Study: National Iranian Oil Company) in the educational and learning environment lies in its contribution to the development of both theoretical and applied knowledge in the fields of organizational management and public policy. This research, by focusing on the development of a transformation-oriented culture in public organizations, helps managers, leaders, and students understand how modern public service approaches can be used to strengthen organizational learning, innovation, and cultural change at both strategic and operational levels. The proposed model can serve as a strategic learning tool that facilitates knowledge sharing, experiential learning, and the development of managerial and strategic competencies within educational and research environments. Therefore, studying and disseminating the findings of such research plays an important role in improving the quality of education, advancing academic research, and strengthening scientific and professional capacities in the field of public sector management.

The originality of this study lies in bridging public administration reform and Learning Spaces Studies. While previous research has examined organizational culture, digital transformation, or modern public services separately, this study conceptualizes cultural transformation as a process of reconfiguring institutional learning environments—integrating structure, technology, leadership, participation, and knowledge circulation into a unified framework. By extending the concept of learning spaces beyond formal educational contexts to complex public-sector organizations, this research contributes a novel, context-

sensitive model that demonstrates how cultural transformation can reshape digital, participatory, and data-driven learning architectures in government institutions.

Literature Review

Organizational culture not only reflects the history, experiences, and environment of the organization, but also plays a decisive role in future research, adaptation to environmental changes, and organizational transformation management. Organizations that actively manage their culture and align it with strategic goals and environmental needs can have higher flexibility and adaptability and be more successful in facing new challenges and opportunities. Thus, a deep understanding of organizational culture and its components is essential for managers and policymakers to be able to provide a suitable work environment, employee commitment, and optimal organizational performance (Almatrodi, 2024). In recent decades, government organizations worldwide have faced rapid environmental changes, new technologies, and increasing citizen expectations. These changes have caused traditional management and classical approaches to providing public services to no longer meet the needs of society, and the need to create a culture of transformation and innovation in the public sector has become more felt than ever before. Several studies have shown that one of the key factors for the success of government organizations in facing these challenges is the empowerment of human resources and the formation of a flexible and transformative organizational culture (Shirazi, 2025; Hafizi, 2021). Organizational culture, especially a service-oriented and transformative culture, can play an important role in increasing the quality of services, responsiveness to citizens, and improving organizational productivity. However, a review of the literature shows that most research has either analyzed the dimensions of organizational culture, or has been limited to formulating policies and management guidelines, and has often paid less attention to designing an operational and integrated model for institutionalizing a culture of transformation in the public sector. For example, the research of Fazli et al. (2024) and Alvani et al. (2023) has presented models for improving public services and service culture, but the models presented are mainly general and conceptual and are less adapted to large and complex organizations such as the National Iranian Oil Company, which has a governmental and technology-oriented structure. This creates a theoretical and practical gap that justifies the necessity of the present study. On the other hand, the research of Zarchi et al. (2023) and Hafizi (2021) has focused on excellence-oriented culture and organizational change, but their models are mainly designed in industrial and cultural environments and do not fully correspond to the specific characteristics of the government sector and modern public services, including a citizen-oriented approach, digitalization of services, and increased transparency and accountability. Also, the National Iranian Oil Company, as one of the largest and most complex government organizations in the country, has several administrative, technical, and service subsystems in which cultural and organizational integration is a major challenge due to its complex structure, traditional history, and geographical spread. The following is a reference to research aligned with the research objectives:

Table 1. Dimensions, components, and indicators extracted from foreign literature

Researchers/Years	Dimensions	Topic	Components/Indicators
Pham et al. (2025)	Advertisement	Improving Public Service Culture through Digital Transformation: A Case Study in Public Administration Organizations in Vietnam	Number of information campaigns implemented, citizens' access to information, effectiveness of messages on citizens' behavior, citizens' satisfaction with information
	Completion of legal institutions		Number of regulations and guidelines developed, percentage of compliance of activities with laws, level of legal coverage of processes, time required for approval of laws
	Development of high-quality administrative human resources		Amount of employee training and development, level of employee skills and competence, employee retention

Researchers/Years	Dimensions	Topic	Components/Indicators
			rate, job satisfaction and employee motivation
	Wide use of information technology		Percentage of digital services provided, level of citizen access to systems, level of employee use of technology, security and reliability of systems
Ihyauddin et al. (2025),	Leadership commitment	Transformation of Organizational Culture in the Era of New Public Management: A Case Study of Implementation in Indonesian Local Government	Amount of support and commitment of senior management to the organization's goals, active participation in projects and decision-making, allocation of resources to achieve goals
	Appropriate policies		Number and quality of policies and guidelines aligned with the organization's goals, degree of compliance of policies with the needs of the internal and external environment, effectiveness of policies in achieving goals
	Effective communication		Number of formal and informal meetings and interactions, quality and clarity of internal and stakeholder communications, level of employee and citizen satisfaction with communications, effectiveness of communications in achieving goals Organization
Hau et al. (2024)	Effectiveness	Service Culture in Public Administration Organizations in the Context of Digital Transformation in Vietnam	Achievement of organizational goals, quality of services provided, rate of realization of projects and programs
	Professionalism		Employee skill and expertise level, compliance with professional standards, level of continuous training and development of employees
	Honesty		Employee compliance with ethical and professional principles, accurate and honest reporting, internal and external trust in the organization
	Transparency		Stakeholder access to information, clarity of processes and decisions, regular and understandable reporting
Latupeirissa et al. (2024)	Security	Transformation in Public Service Delivery: A Comprehensive Review of Digitalization Initiatives	Employee compliance with security protocols, number of security incidents, data and system security, ability to recover information in a crisis
	Technology readiness		Employee access and use of technology, level of use of smart systems, flexibility and updating of systems, technology training for employees
	Quality		Stakeholder satisfaction level, compliance of services with standards, error and complaint rate, continuous improvement of processes
	Accountability		Response time to requests, level of fulfillment of organizational commitments, regular and understandable reporting, satisfaction of citizens and stakeholders
Graessler et al. (2024),	Change management	The Importance of Cultural Change in Systems Engineering Transformation: A Model for Cultural Assessment	Existence of change management programs, success rate of organizational changes, reduction of employee resistance, effectiveness of change implementation
	Leadership		Commitment and support of senior management, change leadership and Innovation, employee motivation and participation, level of leadership influence on organizational culture
	Resources		Access to sufficient financial and human resources, employment of expert personnel, optimal allocation of resources, development and empowerment of employees
	Structure		Agility and flexibility of the structure, definition of roles and responsibilities, coordination between units, adaptation of the structure to goals and processes
Karmi et al. (2025)	Transformation leadership	Modeling Organizational	Leadership and change management dimension: Emphasis on motivation,

Researchers/Years	Dimensions	Topic	Components/Indicators
		Culture in the Context of Digital Transformation in Public Organizations	inspiration, support for innovation, and guiding the organization towards digital transformation goals
	Customer orientation		Values and attitudes dimension: Focus on customer satisfaction, stakeholder needs assessment, improving services, and responding to the expectations of internal and external customers
	Organizational agility		Organizational capability and behavior dimension: Ability to adapt quickly to environmental changes, rapid innovation, flexible decision-making, and rapid response to opportunities and threats
	Transformation management		Process and structure dimension: Planning and directing change processes, reducing employee resistance, stabilizing changes, creating coordination between resources and infrastructure
Ghofrani (2025)	Managerial orientation	Analysis and Review of the Role of New Public Management in the Politicization of the Administrative System	Explicit performance criteria, control over outputs, performance-based reward system
	Decentralization		Delegation of authority to organizational units, separation of duties, independence of units in decision-making
	Market orientation		Outsourcing of services, competition between Providers, adoption of market mechanisms in the public sector
	Deregulation		Reducing strict regulations, flexibility in processes, reducing traditional bureaucracy
	Focus on stakeholders		Focus on “customer”/citizen/stakeholder satisfaction, quality of services, responding to the needs of public service users
Pourmoghaddam et al. (2025)	Employee digital competencies	Designing a Structural-Interpretive Model of the Drivers of Digital Transformation Culture with a Contextual Approach in Tehran Province Water and Sewage Company	Low digital competencies (lack of digital skills and knowledge) — as a main obstacle
	Digital openness / digital adoption		Digital openness (open approach to change and technology) — as a factor with high influence
	Organizational interactions and decision-making		Insufficient interactions and weak decision-making — as a connecting/inhibiting factor in the digital transformation structure
	Organizational digital maturity		Insufficient maturity of the organization in the digital field — a component that is in the “autonomous” area
	Change management / change process		Change management that is influenced by other factors and does not have a superior role
Shirazi (2025)	Structural dimension	Designing an Organizational Model of a Servant Government Based on Transcendental Governance in the Public Sector	Organization of tasks and responsibilities, transparency of hierarchy, organizational agility, delegation of authority and roles, flexibility of the structure
	Process dimension		Process design and optimization, service standardization, automation and digitalization, continuous improvement, service quality management
	Human dimension		Human resource development, employee empowerment, Culture of responsibility, employee motivation and satisfaction, continuous training and learning
	Technology and innovation dimension		Use of information and communication technology, smart infrastructure, innovation in service provision, data monitoring and analysis, information security and protection
	Governance and policy dimension		Transparency and accountability, adherence to ethical principles, citizen participation, macro and strategic policies, performance control and supervision
Arbabi Esfahani et al. (2024)	Professional stakeholders	A Model for Evaluating Digital	Organizational motivation and commitment, acceptance of changes, job

Researchers/Years	Dimensions	Topic	Components/Indicators
		Transformation Culture Policies; A Research in the Radio and Communications Regulatory Authority	satisfaction, promotion of organizational culture
	Operator stakeholders		Operation efficiency, innovation and technology, participation and cooperation
	Citizen stakeholders		Customer satisfaction, work experience, trust and security
	Main stakeholders of the organization		Regulations, reform, review and implementation
Alvani et al. (2023)	Leadership and senior management dimension	Developing a Model for Institutionalizing Service Culture in Iranian Government Organizations	Model and exemplary leadership, support and commitment of senior management, setting cultural goals, creating a service-oriented vision, guiding cultural changes
	Structural and Organizational		Designing a structure appropriate to the service culture, defining roles and responsibilities, delegating authority and decision-making, organizational agility and flexibility
	Human Resources Dimension		Employee training and development, employee empowerment, job motivation and satisfaction, culture of responsibility, creating opportunities for growth and advancement
	Process and Operational Dimension		Reengineering service processes, service standardization, automation and digitalization, service quality management, continuous performance improvement

Previous studies have also shown that institutionalizing a culture of transformation requires simultaneous attention to several key dimensions:

1. Leadership and commitment from top management: Transformational leadership and ongoing support from top management are essential to motivate and guide cultural change.
2. Processes and organizational structure: Designing a flexible structure and optimized processes that support innovation and transformation.
3. Human resources and employee empowerment: Training, empowerment, motivation, and a culture of employee accountability.
4. Technology and innovation: Applying information technology and digitizing processes to facilitate public services and promote transparency.
5. Culture and values: Promoting service-oriented values, accountability, honesty, transparency, and innovation.

Given the aforementioned gaps, the present study seeks to design an operational and integrated model that can institutionalize a culture of transformation in the National Iranian Oil Company and simultaneously consider human, structural, technological, and cultural dimensions. In addition to the conceptual aspect, this model will also include measurable indicators and components so that it can be used in the evaluation and continuous improvement of the organization. The theoretical framework of the research, based on existing literature and previous models, consists of three main pillars:

1. Inputs: factors that initiate cultural transformation, such as leadership commitment, human resources, technology, policies, and legal requirements.
2. Processes: mechanisms for implementing cultural transformation, including change management, training and development, process reengineering, technology deployment, and knowledge management.
3. Outputs: expected results from institutionalizing a culture of transformation, including organizational effectiveness, service quality, transparency and accountability, employee and citizen satisfaction, and creating a culture of innovation and excellence.

In fact, this theoretical framework, based on a systematic and multidimensional approach, includes all dimensions related to creating a culture of transformation in the public sector in an integrated model and allows researchers and managers to analyze and evaluate both key success factors and implementation processes in a transparent manner.

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in the intersection of organizational culture, transformational change, and the modern public service approach. Contemporary public administration literature emphasizes that traditional bureaucratic systems often lack the flexibility and knowledge orientation required to respond to complex societal demands. Although studies have examined organizational culture or public sector reforms independently, there remains a significant knowledge gap regarding how a culture of transformation can be systematically developed within public sector organizations through knowledge-driven mechanisms. Addressing this gap requires integrating insights from organizational learning theory, knowledge management, and transformational leadership to explain how knowledge processes shape cultural change in public institutions.

From this perspective, the modern public service approach provides a conceptual foundation that shifts the focus of public administration from rigid hierarchical control toward collaboration, citizen-centered service, and continuous learning. Within this framework, knowledge-based leadership, organizational learning, digital transformation, and knowledge management function as key enabling mechanisms that facilitate cultural transformation. These elements create an environment in which knowledge is generated, shared, and applied to support adaptive decision-making and innovation. Consequently, the transformation of public sector culture is not merely a structural or procedural change but a knowledge-driven process that reshapes values, behaviors, and organizational practices.

Furthermore, the framework acknowledges that the development of a transformation-oriented culture is influenced by contextual and intervening factors such as bureaucratic structures, traditional administrative norms, policy constraints, technological readiness, and resistance to change. By integrating these elements within a grounded theory paradigm model, the study conceptualizes transformation culture as an outcome of dynamic interactions between knowledge processes, leadership practices, and organizational contexts. This perspective contributes to the literature by offering a knowledge-centered explanation of cultural transformation in the public sector and by proposing a conceptual linkage between modern public service principles and organizational learning mechanisms in large governmental organizations such as the National Iranian Oil Company.

Method

The present study was applied in terms of its purpose and qualitative in terms of its method with a grounded theory approach based on the approach of Strauss and Corbin (1998). In this study, methodological angle was observed using different data collection methods such as library study method and review of specialized sources and texts as well as semi-structured interviews. Data angle, which is controlling the compatibility of different data sources within the same method, was also considered by the researchers in this study and more than one data source was used. Its potential participants were all managers at different levels of the National Iranian Oil Company and employees working in the headquarters department. The sampling method was purposive and individuals were selected. This group was selected to conduct the qualitative part of the research and participated in the interview process. Purposive sampling method was used to determine the samples of this study and determine this group of experts. In this study, the main source of data was interviews, so that the initial interviews were exploratory and descriptive, and gradually after each interview, the data from the interviews were coded interview by interview, and through the method of constant data comparison, theoretical codes emerged through re-coding. In this way, 15 interviews were coded, and concepts and sub-categories and main categories emerged. It should be noted that the densification and saturation of the axial categories was carried out based on theoretical sampling, so that by conducting interviews with the statistical population of the research, the concepts of that category were condensed and enriched. For example, with the first 8 interviews that were conducted, the category of type of change was condensed. In other categories, such as results and consequences, the data was not sufficient,

so the interviews continued based on theoretical sampling until the desired category was saturated. It should be noted that theoretical sampling for the interviews was not based on the number of interviewees but on the extent of their role in condensing the categories. By the 15th interview, the interviews reached theoretical saturation. The duration of the interviews was between 30 and 50 minutes. For the analysis of the qualitative research data, grounded theory was used in ATLAS TI software. In this plan, the stages of analyzing the collected qualitative data were carried out in three stages: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. The interviews were conducted based on the following questions from the selected individuals in the qualitative sample:

- In your opinion, what are the characteristics of the organizational culture governing the National Iranian Oil Company?
- How much readiness do you observe among the employees to accept change and transformation?
- What factors create the greatest resistance to transformation?

How do you define modern public services in the context of the activities of the National Iranian Oil Company?

- What components of modern public services can have the greatest impact on promoting a culture of transformation?
- How do you evaluate successful or unsuccessful experiences of using modern public service approaches in the organization?

How do you evaluate the role of senior managers in shaping a culture of transformation in the organization?

- What characteristics of transformational leadership are essential for creating a culture of transformation in an oil company?
- How can management strengthen employee participation in the transformation process?
- What is the role of human resource training and development in creating a culture of transformation?
- In your opinion, what skills should be strengthened in employees so that they adapt to a culture of transformation?
- What mechanisms are most appropriate for learning and transferring knowledge towards transformation?
- What are the most important cultural, structural, and administrative obstacles to the path of transformation?
- To what extent do laws and regulations hinder or facilitate the creation of a culture of transformation?
- What experiences do you have of employee or manager resistance to change?
- What capacities (technological, knowledge, human capital) in the National Oil Company can help create a culture of transformation?
- What is the role of new technologies (digitalization, automation, etc.) in changing organizational culture?
- What opportunities in the external environment (e.g., oil industry developments or the country's macro policies) can drive a culture of transformation?
- In the near future, what changes are necessary for the success of a culture of transformation in the National Oil Company?
- If you were to suggest three main priorities for creating a culture of transformation, what would they be?
- In your opinion, what model could be most effective for creating a culture of transformation in the public sector (and in particular in the National Iranian Oil Company)?

Statistical descriptions of the characteristics of the field participants are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Demographic characteristics

Category	Demographic Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Men	12	73.33
	Women	3	26.76
Age	40-30	2	6.76
	50-40	5	26.66
	60-50	6	53.32
	Over 60	2	13.33
Education	PhD	10	66.66
	Master	4	26.26
	Bachelor	1	6.66
Total		15	100

According to the frequency observed in the sample members participating in the qualitative research, 73.33% of the participants are women and 26.76% are men. According to the frequency observed in the sample members participating in the qualitative research, 53.32% are between 50-60 years old, 26.66% are between 40-50 years old, 13.33% are over 60 years old, and 76.6% are between 30-40 years old. According to the frequency observed in the sample members participating in the qualitative research, the composition of their educational status is 66.66% PhD, 66.26% Master's degree, and 66.6% Bachelor's degree.

Findings

In this section, data are analyzed in an open, axial, and selective coding manner to emerge a fully evidence-based theory through a systematic and gradual process. Grounded theory allows researchers to simultaneously collect, analyze, and interpret data, and to continuously create feedback between data and theory. One of the important features of grounded theory is that the research process is flexible and the researcher continuously interacts between new data and initial analyses. This method allows researchers to develop realistic and reliable theories based on real data. In this technique, theoretical sampling methods are used to collect data in a wide and deep manner and help complete the theory. Also, validation techniques such as continuous comparison and examination of differences and similarities in the data are used to strengthen the accuracy and validity of the theory. For open coding, all interviews were entered into Atlasti software. Necessary checks were made and the desired codes were extracted. The labeling of the codes was done based on the interviews and the researcher tried to adhere to the individuals' insights towards the respondents as much as possible in order to avoid any possible and unwanted bias as much as possible. Throughout the coding process, the researcher adhered to the theoretical sensitivity that is the principle of grounded theory research and did this to enrich the research as much as possible. Table 3 shows an example of the coding of the interviews conducted.

Table 3. Reference to some interviews and relevant coding

Interview	Initial Code
The energy market is always changing and fluctuating. Oil and gas prices sometimes rise and sometimes fall, and this greatly affects the decisions and plans of the National Oil Company. When the market is constantly changing, the organization must always be ready to update its working methods and policies, otherwise it will fall behind the competition.	Continuous changes in the energy market
The National Oil Company operates in an environment that is greatly affected by international politics. Any decision or tension at the global level, such as relations with other countries or political decisions of major powers, can directly or indirectly put pressure on the company's performance and future. These pressures force the organization to be flexible and change its approaches.	Political and international pressures
Today, the world has become very sensitive to environmental issues. New laws and regulations are being passed to reduce pollution and use clean energy. These environmental requirements force the National Oil Company to change its methods of production, extraction, and even consumption of resources to be in line with laws and to respond to the concerns of the global community.	New environmental requirements
The oil and gas industry is a global competitive field. Different countries are trying to have a greater share of the energy market. This competition means that the National Oil Company cannot rely only on traditional methods and must use new technologies and innovative methods to survive and progress so as not to lag behind global competitors.	Global competition in oil and gas
Sanctions are one of the major challenges for the National Oil Company. These restrictions make it difficult to access financial resources, and limit the purchase of advanced equipment and cooperation with foreign companies. In such circumstances, the organization is forced to find alternative ways and, with creativity and proper management, bypass obstacles.	Restrictions resulting from sanctions

Interview	Initial Code
Today's people and society expect more from state-owned companies. Oil production alone is no longer enough, but expectations such as transparency, social responsibility, attention to the environment, and improved quality of life are also raised. To meet these expectations, the National Oil Company must change its work culture and management style.	Changing public social expectations
To operate globally, the National Oil Company must align itself with international laws and standards. From oil contracts to environmental and safety issues, everything requires compliance with global standards. This forces the organization to change its structure and culture in a way that is compatible with the international environment.	Need to comply with international laws
Today, employees and society expect the managers of the National Oil Company to clearly state what decisions they have made and why. This means that decisions can no longer be made behind closed doors and no one asks why. Transparency in accountability builds trust and prevents many misunderstandings and problems.	Demand for transparent accountability of managers
The people and stakeholders of the National Oil Company do not only pay attention to the quantity of work, but quality is more important to them. They expect the services provided to be faster, better, and in accordance with global standards. If the quality of services is high, public trust also increases.	Expectations for increased service quality
Today's society expects large companies, especially the National Oil Company, to go beyond profit. They should also consider social issues such as job creation, environmental protection, and local development. This social responsibility reinforces the company's positive image in the eyes of the public.	Emphasis on social responsibility
Employees want fairness in the workplace; whether in terms of salaries and benefits, career opportunities, or performance evaluations. If employees feel that fairness exists, their motivation and commitment to work will increase, and a culture of change will be more easily established.	Need to observe organizational justice

Also, the theoretical foundations and the extraction of relevant codes are examined below:

Table 4. Codes extracted from the theoretical foundations

Source	Related text	Dimension or code
Hofstede (1980)	This dimension indicates the degree to which power inequality is accepted in the organization.	Power distance index
	This dimension refers to the tendency of cultures to accept or avoid uncertainty.	Uncertainty avoidance index
	This dimension indicates the tendency towards individualism or collectivism in the organization.	Individualism vs. collectivism index
	This dimension refers to the tendency towards individualism or collectivism in the organization.	Uncertainty avoidance index
	This dimension refers to the tendency towards cultures to accept or avoid uncertainty.	Individualism vs. collectivism index
	This dimension indicates the tendency towards individualism or collectivism in the organization.	Uncertainty avoidance index
	This dimension refers to the tendency towards cultures to accept or avoid uncertainty.	Individualism vs. collectivism index
	This dimension indicates the tendency towards individualism or collectivism in the organization.	Uncertainty avoidance index
	This dimension refers to the tendency towards cultures to accept or avoid uncertainty.	Individualism vs. collectivism index
	This dimension indicates the tendency towards individualism or collectivism in the organization.	Uncertainty avoidance index
Schein (1990)	This dimension refers to the tendency towards cultures to accept or avoid uncertainty.	Organizational culture appearance
	This dimension includes the observable and tangible aspects of organizational culture that are easily identifiable.	Stated values
	This dimension refers to the values and norms expressed by organizational members, how they describe themselves.	Core assumptions
Kotter (1996)	Katzer believes that organizational culture is formed based on a set of shared values and principles that guide behaviors and decision-making in the organization.	Shared values
	Organizational culture includes norms and behaviors that people in the organization consistently follow and that these behaviors can be observed and measured.	Observable norms and behaviors
	Employees' deep-rooted attitudes and beliefs, which are often unconscious, have a direct impact on the organization's performance and interactions among employees.	Core beliefs and attitudes
	Katzer emphasizes that culture includes symbols, stories, slogans, and rituals that reinforce the organization's values and norms.	Symbols and symbolism
	Leadership style in the organization plays a key role in shaping and stabilizing organizational culture, and the behavior of leaders sets a model for employees.	Leadership style
	A successful organizational culture is a culture that is consistent with the organization's internal and external environment and allows for rapid response to changes.	Adaptation to the environment
Handy (1993)	In this type of culture, power is concentrated in the hands of a single person or small group. Decision-making is rapid, but people outside the center of power have little influence. The network of relationships and personal power plays an important role.	Power culture

Source	Related text	Dimension or code
	The focus is on specific rules, guidelines, and roles. Each person has a specific responsibility and the organization acts like a machine. Stability and efficiency are important, and change occurs slowly.	Role culture
	The focus is on teams and projects. People with different skills work together to solve problems and achieve specific goals. Flexibility and teamwork are highly valued.	Task/team culture
	The focus is on individuals, and the organization is shaped around the needs and abilities of individuals. The organization serves individuals, and individual independence and creativity are valued.	Individual culture
Deal & Kennedy (1993)	The core values that guide behavior and decision-making in the organization. These values tell employees what is important and what is not acceptable.	Values
	People who symbolize the success and values of the organization. Heroes transmit desirable behaviors to other members through their achievements.	Heroes
	Formal or informal activities and ceremonies that demonstrate the organization's values and norms and strengthen organizational identity. Example: Success celebrations, recognition of exemplary employees.	Rituals and rituals
	Stories, myths, and symbols that convey the organization's culture and teach employees expected behaviors. This network promotes cultural cohesion and communication among members.	Cultural network/stories and symbols
Cameron & Quinn (2011)	The organization is like a family. Emphasis is placed on collaboration, participation, empathy, and employee development. Leadership is coaching and supportive, and human relationships are the focus of activities.	Tribal/family culture
	Focus on creativity, innovation, and risk-taking to achieve new opportunities. The organization is dynamic and flexible, and decision-making is often informal and team-oriented.	Innovative/agile culture
	Emphasis on competition, results, goals, and profitability. The organization is outward-looking, and performance, achievements, and tangible successes are important.	Market/competitive culture
	Focus on structure, rules, procedures, and control. Stability, efficiency, and predictability are important, and decision-making is usually centralized and formal.	Hierarchical culture/ Bureaucratic
Denhardt & Denhardt (2015)	Emphasis is placed on government and public organizations serving the people and society, not just customers; decisions should be made in the best interests of society and democratic values.	Focus on citizens and society
	Citizens should actively participate in the decision-making process and the provision of public services to foster a sense of ownership and social responsibility.	Partnership and collaboration
	Leadership should be ethical and uphold democratic values, social justice, and accountability in the provision of public services.	Values-based leadership
	Public managers and employees are responsible for safeguarding public resources and are accountable to society and must make their decisions transparent and defensible.	Consultation and accountability
	Public organizations must be able to adapt to change and provide innovative solutions to community issues, not just control and direct processes.	Support for flexibility and innovation
Osborne and Gabler (1992)	Focus on tangible achievements and results rather than purely administrative processes; evaluate the performance of public organizations based on their real impact.	Orientation
	Provide public services centered on the needs of citizens and customers; the government provides quality and responsive services rather than control.	Customer focus
	Delegate authority to local units and employees for rapid and effective decision-making; use networks and partnerships with the private sector and society.	Partnership and networking
	Encourage public organizations to innovate, be creative, and be productive; use private sector management methods to improve performance.	Efficiency and innovation
	The government must be accountable and manage public resources effectively; transparency and performance auditing are key elements.	Accountable organizations
Moore (1995)	Public organizations must focus their activities on creating real value for society and citizens; public value includes social welfare, justice, and the public interest.	Public value
	Government organizations should report their results and performance transparently and be accountable to citizens and society.	Audit and accountability
	Government managers should have the ability to guide organizations towards public value goals and respond to community needs, and define long-term strategies.	Leadership and strategy
	To create public value, organizations should actively engage with citizens, civil society, the private sector, and other stakeholders.	Interaction with stakeholders
	Government organizations should be able to innovate in service delivery and adapt to environmental changes to maximize public value.	Innovation and flexibility

Source	Related text	Dimension or code
Vedung (1997)	Government organizations should regularly evaluate their programs and policies to ensure that the set goals are achieved and resources are used optimally.	Policy evaluation
	The focus is on providing public services at the lowest cost and with the greatest impact; that is, both operational efficiency and the achievement of social goals should be observed.	Efficiency and effectiveness
	Government organizations should be accountable to citizens and provide transparent information on their performance to maintain public trust.	Accountability and transparency
	Establish clear standards and criteria for public services, in order to ensure the quality and uniformity of services provided to citizens.	Standardization and quality
	Emphasis on continuous review and innovation in service provision in order to respond to social changes and new needs of society.	Reform and innovation

Based on the dimensions of the Strauss and Corbin (1998) data model, the classification of identification codes is specified in Tables 5 to 9.

Table 5. Coding of qualitative data (causal conditions)

Selected Category	Initial code	Focus Category
Causal Conditions	Continuous changes in the energy market	External Environmental Pressures
	Political and international pressures	
	New environmental requirements	
	Global competition in oil and gas	
	Restrictions resulting from sanctions	
	Changing public social expectations	
	Need to comply with international laws	
	Demand for transparent accountability of managers	Key Stakeholder Expectations
	Expectation of increased service quality	
	Emphasis on social responsibility	
	Need to observe organizational justice	
	Request for decision-making agility	
	Attention to the well-being of employees and families	
	Need to provide assurance in financial results	Need for Transparency
	Combating administrative corruption	
	Transparency in contracts and transactions	
	Free access to information	
	Standardization of performance reporting	
	Transparency in resource allocation	
	Increase in external oversight	
	Reduce discrimination and organizational rents	Digital Technology Transformations
	Expand organizational artificial intelligence	
	Development of big data infrastructures	
	Digitalization of administrative processes	
	Use of the Industrial Internet of Things	
	Growth of secure cloud systems	
	Transformation in inter-organizational communications	
	Need for digital skills of employees	Decrease in Organizational Productivity
	Increasing costs Operational	
	Obsolete equipment and infrastructure	
	Reduced motivation of specialist staff	
	Long decision-making processes	
	Discoordination between organizational units	
	Weakness in the performance evaluation system	
	Waste of human and financial resources	

Table 6. Open coding of qualitative data (Strategic conditions)

Selected Category	Initial code	Focus Category
Strategies	Training new specialized skills	Human Resource Empowerment
	Upgrading employees' digital skills	
	Developing clear career paths	
	Establishing a performance reward system	
	Supporting employees' innovative ideas	
	Strengthening interpersonal and communication skills	
	Creating a culture of individual responsibility	
	Implementing artificial intelligence systems	New Technology Implementation
	Using data mining for decision-making	
	Digitalizing operational processes	
	Developing e-service platforms	

Selected Category	Initial code	Focus Category
	Using the Internet of Things in industry	Institutionalization of Administrative Transparency
	Improving organizational cybersecurity	
	Renovating outdated technological equipment	
	Creating online reporting systems	
	Free access to public information	
	Developing financial transparency standards	
	Strengthening the internal audit system	
	Creating a platform for citizen oversight	
	Transparency in resource allocation	
	Periodic reporting of managers' performance	
	Conducting continuous training workshops	Development of Organizational Learning
	Creating organizational innovation centers	
	Forming group learning teams	
	Supporting project-based learning	
	Sharing successful employee experiences	
	Strengthening inter-organizational learning	
	Utilizing training Digital	Strengthening Transformational Leadership
	Training leaders for innovation	
	Modeling transformational behaviors	
	Empowering middle managers	
	Increasing employee participation in decision-making	
	Inspiring organizational vision	
	Strengthening change management skills	
	Promoting ethical values and transparency	

Table 7. Open coding of qualitative data (Consequences)

Selected Category	Initial code	Focus Category
Consequences	Improving decision-making speed	Increasing organizational efficiency
	Reducing human resource waste	
	Shortening administrative processes	
	Increasing equipment efficiency	
	Optimizing information flow	
	Increasing interdepartmental coordination	Improving service quality
	Improving team performance	
	Increasing stakeholder satisfaction	
	Standardizing service processes	
	Reducing operational errors	
	Easier access to services	
	Improving the experience of service users	
	Increasing innovation in services	Sustainable public trust
	Improving reliability and accuracy of services	
	Improving transparency in performance	
	Enhancing managers' accountability	
	Reducing corruption and rent-seeking	
	Increasing organizational justice	Reducing administrative costs
	Constructive interaction with society	
	Increasing social capital	
	Improving the organization's brand reputation	
	Eliminating repetitive activities	
	Reducing administrative paperwork costs	
	Saving energy resources	
	Optimizing the supply chain	Government competitive advantage
	Reducing ineffective training costs	
	Better use of new technology	
	Strengthening international standing	
	Improving capital-attraction capacity	
	Increasing energy market share	
	Promoting the national brand	
	Developing capacities Innovative	
	Ability to respond quickly to changes	
	Increasing the attractiveness of foreign cooperation	

Table 8. Coding of qualitative data (Contextual conditions)

Selected Category	Initial code	Focus Category
Contextual conditions	Strong focus on decision-making	Traditional administrative structure
	Long organizational hierarchy	
	Slow administrative processes	
	Resistance to change	
	Structural inflexibility	
	High dependence on cumbersome regulations	
	Lack of innovative structures	

Selected Category	Initial code	Focus Category
	Preference for stability over innovation	Bureaucratic organizational culture
	Emphasis on employee obedience	
	Low-risk view of managers	
	Cultural resistance to change	
	Focus on form over content	
	Lack of mutual trust in the organization	
	Prioritization of personal interests over organizational interests	
	Lack of digital skills	Employee skill level
	Weakness in creativity and innovation	
	Reliance on traditional training	
	Low problem-solving skills	
	Knowledge gap between generations	
	Lack of interpersonal skills	
	Weakness in teamwork	National macro policies
	Emphasis on energy self-sufficiency	
	Focus on national security	
	Frequent policy changes	
	Dependence on oil revenues	
	Variable political orientations	
	Instability in protective laws	
	Pressure for sustainable development	Existing technological infrastructure
	Weakness in systems integration	
	Lack of cybersecurity Adequate	
	Obsolete technology equipment	
	Lack of widespread access to new technology	
	Limitations in bandwidth and communications	
	Dependence on foreign technologies	
	Lack of sustainable investment in technology	

Table 9. Open coding of qualitative data (Intervening conditions)

Selected Category	Initial code	Focus Category
Intervening conditions	Fear of losing position	Internal Employee Resistance
	Concern about increasing responsibilities	
	Attachment to traditional methods	
	Distrust of top managers	
	Lack of motivation for change	
	Concern about skills mismatch	
	Rumors and negative organizational atmosphere	Transformational Managerial Leadership
	Inspiration in the path of transformation	
	Creating motivation in employees	
	Ability to manage conflict	
	Strengthening the spirit of innovation	
	Transparency in decision-making	
	Active support for new ideas	Senior Policymaker Support
	Empowering work teams	
	Approval of laws facilitating transformation	
	Allocation of sustainable support resources	
	Ensuring the relative independence of the organization	
	Reducing sectional political interventions	Limited Financial Resources
	Strengthening an effective monitoring system	
	Providing transformation-oriented incentives	
	Coordination of macro policies with the organization's programs	
	Lack of investment in innovation	
	Inability to modernize equipment	Strategic Interorganizational Interactions
	Limitations in training employees	
	Delays in implementing transformation projects	
	Dependence on unsustainable income	
	Reducing research and development budgets	
	Inadequate allocation of financial resources	
	Cooperation with Universities and research centers	Strategic Interorganizational Interactions
	Creating joint innovation networks	
	International knowledge transfer	
	Collaboration with the private sector	
	Synergy with other government institutions	
	Participation in regional projects	

Selected Category	Initial code	Focus Category
	Exchange of managerial and technological experiences	

After completing the analysis and measurement of various data, the final research model is presented as follows:

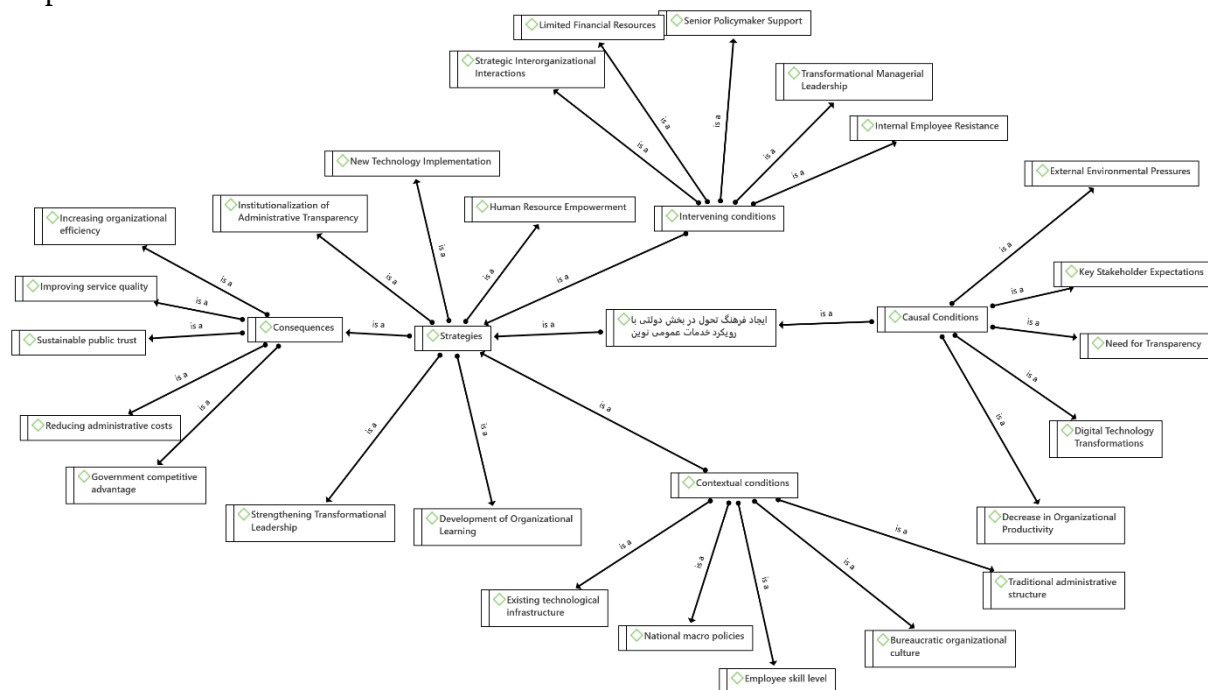


Figure 1. The foundational data model for creating a culture of transformation in the public sector with a modern public service approach (case study: National Iranian Oil Company) (ATLAS.TI software output)

Four quantitative criteria were used to examine the validity, transferability, verifiability, and reliability: Holstey coefficient, Scott's p-coefficient, Cohen's kappa index, and Krappendorff's alpha. The correlation of experts' views by calculating the Holstey coefficient or "percentage of observed agreement" was 0.865, which is a significant value. Considering the shortcomings of the Holstey method, the p-Scott index was also calculated, which was 0.805. The fourth index for estimating the validity of qualitative research is the Cohen's kappa index. The Cohen's kappa index in this study was 0.844. Finally, Krappendorff's alpha was used, and its value in this study was estimated to be 0.824.

By using these indicators simultaneously, the study does not aim to over-quantify qualitative analysis but rather to demonstrate robustness and transparency in the coding process. The convergence of results across multiple reliability measures strengthens confidence in the consistency of the coding scheme and supports the credibility of the derived categories and the final paradigm model. This multi-indicator approach aligns with methodological recommendations for enhancing rigor in qualitative and mixed-method grounded theory research.

In the proposed model of this study, the paradigm structure is interpreted based on a knowledge-oriented perspective and through the logic of grounded theory. The core phenomenon of the model is "creating a culture of transformation in the public sector", which finds its meaning within the modern public service approach. The causal conditions include factors such as knowledge-based leadership, organizational learning, digital transformation, and knowledge management, which together serve as enablers for the formation of a transformative culture. The contextual conditions of the model encompass elements such as the bureaucratic structure of public organizations, traditional administrative culture, and overarching policy requirements, while the intervening conditions include factors like technological limitations and organizational resistance to change. The central strategies identified in the model involve employee empowerment, development of knowledge and learning, and redesign of managerial processes, which ultimately lead to outcomes such as enhanced organizational

flexibility, improved efficiency in public service delivery, and strengthened innovation within public organizations.

Therefore, the paradigm interpretation of the model demonstrates that knowledge and organizational learning play a foundational role in shaping a culture of transformation in the public sector, and that the modern public service approach provides the necessary context for transforming traditional organizations into knowledge-based, agile, and transformation-oriented structures.

Discussion

The findings of this study show that the culture of transformation in the National Iranian Oil Company can be interpreted beyond an administrative change as a redesign of the “organizational learning space” in the context of modern public services. The results of Chapter 4 showed that a set of causal, contextual, and intervening factors shape the organization’s capacity to transition from a bureaucratic structure to a digital and data-driven learning environment. In this framework, external environmental pressures, technological developments, stakeholder expectations, and declining productivity are not only drivers of managerial change, but also forces that recreate the organizational learning space.

According to the findings of Karami et al. (2025), environmental pressures and increasing competition push the organization towards improving flexibility and embracing innovation. These pressures can be analyzed at a theoretical level as drivers of reconfiguring the learning space; Because in order to respond to economic and regulatory developments, the organization is forced to transform traditional mechanisms of knowledge transfer and hierarchical decision-making into interactive, networked, and learning models.

In this regard, Ghofrani (2025) emphasizes the necessity of strengthening regulatory institutions and institutionalizing ethical values, which from the perspective of learning space studies means creating transparent infrastructures for knowledge circulation and accountability in organizational learning environments.

Key stakeholder expectations, which Pourmoghaddam et al. (2025) consider as a pressure factor for efficiency and transparency, emerged in this study as a determining factor in redefining the organization’s interaction space with the surrounding environment. Increasing demands for accountability, service quality, and transparency move the organization from a closed administrative space to an open and responsive learning space; a space in which data, digital reporting, and stakeholder participation become part of the organization’s learning architecture.

Zarchi et al. (2023) also emphasize that values such as innovation and participation should be institutionalized in the organizational culture; in the Learning Spaces framework, this means designing environments that facilitate horizontal interaction, collaborative learning, and collective decision-making.

The need for transparency, which Hafizi (2021) introduces as a fundamental condition for modern public services, was analyzed in this study as the infrastructure of trust in the organizational learning space. Without transparency, the flow of knowledge is disrupted and distrust is formed; as a result, the organization's learning space becomes a control-oriented and change-resistant environment. In contrast, digital reporting systems and data-driven dashboards can transform the learning space into an environment based on trust, continuous feedback, and modifiability.

Digital technology developments, as Shirazi (2025) points out, will only be effective if the attitudes and skills of employees change. This finding is consistent with the Learning Spaces literature, which sees technology not as a mere tool but as a platform for redesigning the organizational learning experience. Data-driven technologies, automation, and integrated information systems enable the formation of distributed learning environments in which knowledge flows across units and data-driven decision-making replaces individual intuition.

However, as Arbabi Esfahani et al. (2024) and Staffenova et al (2026) attribute productivity decline to bureaucracy and poor skills, this study also showed that without the promotion of digital competencies and continuous learning, technology alone will not be able to recreate the learning space. At the level of contextual conditions, the findings showed that the traditional administrative structure and bureaucratic culture are the most important obstacles to redesigning the learning space.

Alwani et al. (2023) and Jiang et al (2026) emphasize that without reforming administrative structures, the move towards modern public services will be slow. From the perspective of Learning Spaces studies, heavy hierarchical structures prevent the formation of collaborative and networked learning spaces and limit the horizontal flow of knowledge. Therefore, the transition to flexible and data-driven structures can be considered a prerequisite for designing a dynamic learning space. Amidst disruptive conditions, transformational leadership plays a pivotal role in the architecture of the learning space. Transformational leaders provide the psychological and structural context necessary for continuous learning by providing a shared vision, empowering employees, and supporting innovation. In contrast, employee resistance, which stems from past unsuccessful experiences and perceived insecurity, can turn the learning space into a defensive and closed environment. Therefore, change management, organizational dialogue, and active employee participation are key elements in redesigning the organizational learning space.

The strategies extracted from the research – including human resource empowerment, digital infrastructure development, transparency institutionalization, organizational learning enhancement, and transformational leadership – collectively lead to a reorganization of the organizational learning space. This reorganization brings about outcomes such as increased efficiency, improved service quality, reduced administrative costs, and enhanced public trust; but more importantly, it transforms the organization into a continuous and adaptive learning environment that is able to respond to the complexities of the learning environment.

Consequently, the culture of transformation in the National Iranian Oil Company can be considered a process of redesigning the organizational learning space in the context of digital transformation and modern public services. This process requires the alignment of structure, technology, human capital, and leadership. Only in such a framework can transformation go beyond administrative reform and lead to a sustainable re-creation of the organizational learning space; a space in which learning, transparency, innovation, and accountability are institutionalized.

Conclusion

The findings of this study, from the perspective of Learning Spaces studies, show that transformation in government organizations can be analyzed as a redesign of the “institutional learning space”; a space in which administrative structure, digital technology, leadership patterns, and organizational culture integrally shape the learning experience of employees and the ways in which knowledge is produced and circulated. Unlike traditional approaches that examine transformation mainly at the level of process or policy reform, this study shows that the sustainability of transformation depends on the reconfiguration of formal and informal learning environments within the organization.

From a theoretical perspective, the results indicate that environmental pressures (Karimi et al., 2025), the need for transparency (Hafizi, 2021), and stakeholder expectations (Pourmoghaddam et al., 2024; Zarchi et al., 2023) can be interpreted as forces shaping the architecture of organizational learning space; Forces that move the organization from a closed bureaucratic space to an open, data-driven, and interactive environment.

Also, as Shirazi (2024) emphasizes, digital technology only leads to real transformation when it is accompanied by the development of learning competencies and changes in attitudes; that is, digital transformation is essentially a cognitive-cultural redesign of the learning space, not simply a modernization of infrastructure. This research also shows empirically

that hierarchical structures and bureaucratic culture (Alwani et al., 2023) are obstacles to the formation of collaborative and distributed learning spaces and that without their modification, even the most advanced digital infrastructures will not lead to the re-creation of learning space.

Therefore, the main contribution of this study to the field of Learning Spaces Studies is to provide a conceptual model that shows how the alignment of administrative structure, digital infrastructure, transformational leadership and human resource empowerment can lead to the formation of a “transformative organizational learning space” in the public sector. In this way, the present study expands the scope of Learning Spaces studies from formal educational settings to organizational learning environments in the public sector and shows that the concept of learning space can be analyzed and designed not only in the classroom, but also in complex institutional contexts. This conceptual development can provide a basis for future studies in the field of designing digital learning spaces in public organizations, inter-organizational learning ecosystems and data-driven transformation in the public sector.

To advance knowledge in the field of creating a culture of transformation in the public sector through a modern public service approach, it is essential to first examine the theoretical foundations of organizational culture, organizational transformation, and modern public service management in an integrated manner. In this regard, it is recommended that future research focus on explaining the relationship between organizational values, beliefs, and norms with transformation processes in public organizations, and demonstrate how these elements can facilitate the acceptance of change and innovation within bureaucratic structures. Moreover, the development of conceptual models that clarify the connection between organizational culture, transformational leadership, and the modern public service approach can significantly enrich the theoretical literature in this field.

From a knowledge-based perspective, conducting comparative studies on the experiences of different countries in implementing the modern public service approach and its impact on forming a transformation-oriented culture in public organizations is of great importance. Such studies can help identify key components such as transparency, accountability, stakeholder participation, organizational learning, and innovation, enabling the localization of these concepts within large public organizations such as the National Iranian Oil Company. In addition, examining the role of digital technologies, knowledge management, and information infrastructures in facilitating cultural transformation processes can contribute to the development of both theoretical and practical frameworks in this area.

Finally, it is suggested that future research focus on designing scientific indicators and tools for measuring the culture of transformation in public sector organizations and systematically modeling the factors that influence the formation and sustainability of this culture. Particular attention should be given to the roles of organizational leadership, learning systems, employee participation mechanisms, and management policies in creating a supportive environment for transformation. Such an approach can not only strengthen the theoretical literature but also provide practical models for managers and policymakers, ultimately enhancing efficiency and innovation within public organizations.

Limitations of the Study:

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research was conducted as a case study within the National Iranian Oil Company; therefore, the findings may reflect the specific organizational and institutional context of this organization and may not be fully generalizable to all public sector institutions. Second, the qualitative nature of the study and the reliance on interview data may involve subjective interpretations despite efforts to ensure reliability and validity through systematic coding and analysis. Third, access to some managerial levels and organizational information was limited due to administrative constraints, which may have restricted the diversity of perspectives included in the study.

Suggestions for Future Research:

Future studies are encouraged to examine the proposed model in other public sector organizations and governmental agencies to assess its applicability and generalizability across different institutional contexts. Quantitative studies could also be conducted to test and validate the relationships among the identified components of the model. Additionally, comparative studies between public and private sector organizations may provide deeper insights into the mechanisms that facilitate or hinder the development of a transformation-oriented culture. Further research could also explore the role of emerging digital technologies, advanced knowledge management systems, and innovation ecosystems in strengthening transformation culture in public organizations.

Practical Implications for Managers and Policymakers:

The findings of this study provide several practical implications for managers and policymakers in the public sector. Managers should prioritize the development of knowledge-based leadership and foster organizational learning environments that encourage knowledge sharing, creativity, and continuous improvement. Policymakers can support cultural transformation by promoting policies that enhance transparency, digital transformation, and participatory governance within public organizations. In addition, investing in knowledge management infrastructures, employee empowerment programs, and capacity-building initiatives can help create an organizational environment that supports innovation and adaptability, ultimately improving the effectiveness and quality of public service delivery.

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The author declares that he has no competing financial interests or known personal relationships that would influence the report presented in this article.

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