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Assessing the Implementation of E-Governance in Arab Counties

Alaa-Aldin Abdul Rahim A. Al Athmay
Department of Management, Marketing and Public Administration
University of Sharjah, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

Email: aathmay@sharjah.ac.ae

Abstract

Benefits from e-government are pervasive. Not only citizens of a country receive a quality services and empowering them through two ways communications, but the government, businesses, other stakeholders are also benefited from the adoption of e-government. This is an exploratory study aimed at assessing the implementation of e-governance in Arab countries and to review and analyze the current status and challenges facing those countries in e-governance implementation. E-governance is a concept aimed at building better relationship with the public with purpose to achieve efficient, speedy, transparent and accountable government. This paper reviews data on global ranking of Arab countries performance on e-governance and analyze data and information extracted from relevant literatures on e-governance. The data reveals discrepancies in performance among Arab countries on all indices used in this study. On the e-participation index, with exception of few countries such as Bahrain, Egypt and Tunisia, the average score of most Arab countries is only 0.10 out of the maximum score of 1.0. The result indicates that Arab countries do not place emphasis on e-participation. The state of the E-Governance Readiness of Arab Countries is explained through the force-field diagram.

Key Words: E-government, E-governance, Governance, Arab Countries, ICT

Introduction

E-government is an institutional approach focuses on carrying out decisions related to the use of information and communication technology (ICT) to transact the business of government and promising better delivery of its services to citizens, improved interactions with businesses and empowering citizens through access to information. It uses (ICT) to transform the traditional public sector by making it more accessible, transparent, effective and accountable. The end result of the adoption of e-government is to create a more satisfied picture of government business processes. E-government is not only putting a computer on the desk of bureaucrats, rather, it aims to change the mentality of those bureaucrats so that they treat citizens as valued customers of government or important participants in decision-making (Shakya & Sigdel, 2007). E-governance is wider concept which reflects the relationships between government employees, elected or appointed, and the wider society. As interpreted by Heeks (2003) e-governance goes beyond the provision of simple service and builds an external interaction with the diverse stakeholders of government. E-governance means

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building positive relationship between the governing and the governed through the integration of people, processes, information and technology to achieve governance objectives. Successful implementation of e-governance requires the movement from passive information society to an active engagement of citizens. While the definitions of e-government and e-governance overlap (UN Global E-Readiness Reports, 2005; Gartner Group, 2003; Adeyemo, 2011; Fraga, 2002), there is a significant differences between the two terms. E-government involves using ICT, especially the Internet, to improve and transform the traditional way of providing government services to citizens, businesses and other government agencies, while E-governance is wider concept which goes beyond the simple provision of services through the use electronic mean by building an external interaction with diverse stakeholders in the external environment. E-governance involves the usage of ICTs at various levels of government and public sector organizations for purpose of enhancing governance (Heeks, 2003; Holms, 2001, Bin Salamat, Bin Hassan & Bin Muhammad, 2011).

There is a need for understanding the developments of e-governance initiative of the Arab countries. I investigated the current performance of the Arab Countries in e-government development and e-participation. The United Nations E-Government Survey 2005, 2008 and 2010 has been used as the main reference document in writing this paper. The Author uses some indices of E-Government Development (EGDI) to shed light on how far Arab Countries have used the information and communication technology to facilitate an efficient, speedy and transparent process of disseminating and exchanging services and information to the public and other organizations. The paper seeks to provide an assessment of the implementation of e-governance in Arab countries. In addition, semi-structured interviews with a sample of Arab expatriates working in the field of academia were conducted to gather additional information on obstacles facing Arab countries in their endeavor to achieve the e-governance objectives. This paper is organized as follows. First, a discussion of the meaning and benefits of e-governance is presented followed by the literature review of extant literature. Then, the current performance of Arab countries in three indices which constitute the backbone of the e-governance practices is presented alongside the e-participation. Towards the end, the analysis of realities and the obstacles of e-governance in Arab countries is presented along with the force-field model of the E-Governance Readiness of Arab Countries.

Meaning of E-Governance

E-governance nowadays becomes the mantra and the key success factor for governments in the presence of increased citizen's expectations, evolving societies, fiscal demands and fierce competitive era. E-government is the use of internet by public sector organizations with aims of better access and delivery of services to its clients. It marks the most revolutionary shift in

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governance and the fundamental institutional change of the way government operates and transforms its relationship with citizens, businesses and other governments. Government bureaucracies are typically described as rules, processes, and input oriented. E-Government has been perceived as a reply to such issues. Accenture, a leading consulting, technology, and outsourcing, viewed e- governance as using new technologies to strengthen relationships with citizens. E-governance defines and assesses the impacts of ICT on the practices, attitudes and behaviors on different spectrum of the society. E-governance is not only concerning the provision of services through the application of electronic means but rather entails building external interactions (Heeks, 2001), enhancing democracy and trust of the political institutions of government (Lenihan 2002, The Gartner Group, 2003). According to UNESCO, "E-governance is the public sector's use of information and communication technologies with the aims of improving information and service delivery, encouraging citizen participation in the decision-making process and making government more accountable, transparent and effective. The UN Global E-government readiness report (2005) provides broad definition of e-government. E-government according to this report entails not only the process of services and information delivery but also include the involvement and empowerment of the public through better access and participation in decision making process. E-governance involves new styles of leadership, new ways of debating and deciding policy and investment, new ways of accessing education, new ways of listening to citizens and new ways of organizing and delivering information and services.

E-governance is generally considered as a wider concept than e-government, since it can bring about a change in the way citizens relate to governments and to each other. E-governance can bring forth new concepts of citizenship, both in terms of citizen needs and responsibilities. Its objective is to engage, enable and empower the citizen. It is assumed that the adoption of information and communication technology by government organizations can enhance the practice of e-governance. E- Governance integrates the human and the human side of technology. It integrates people, processes, information, cultural, and environment in achieving the governance objectives. Through this integration, e-governance can contribute towards enhancing the democracy, transparency, accountability and respect of the rights of the citizens. E-governance is the continuous improvements of service delivery, citizens' engagement and governance by providing new information flows from citizens to government. The government through the adoption of ICT can provide its citizens, as consumers of public service, with details of public sector operations and therefore provide more legitimacy to its existence (Heeks, 2001). The e-governance can support and sustain good governance by providing all stakeholders (citizens and businesses) of better public service delivery, a better transparent information and easier access to the political

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authorities. E-governance may be seen as a wider concept that goes beyond the simple service provision to build external interactions. The principal indicators of e-governance are efficiency, effectiveness, and rule of law, trust, participation, democracy, transparency, accountability and respect of human rights. The main aims of e-governance are to make public administration more transparent, speedy and accountable, while addressing the society's needs and expectations through efficient public services and effective interaction between the people, businesses and government (Farooquie, 2011).

Governance was defined as the process by which individuals and institutions, public and private, manage their common affairs (United Nation, 2002). It is a collective process resulted from the interaction of the public sector and civil society for purpose to simplify governance for government, citizens and businesses. E-Governance is a wider concept that encompasses all forms of governance that can be undertaken not only by government authority but by businesses, non-governmental organizations and citizens (Keohane & Nye, 2000). There are various features which describe the good governance. Good governance is participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, effectice and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law (Sardi and Mlikota, 2002). E-governance is the application of ICTs at various levels of government and by various public and private agencies for purpose to achieve governance objectives. The most important utilities of e-governance in developing countries include features such as accountability, transparency, participation, equity, promotion of the rule of law and decentralization (UN e-government survey 2008, 2010). The adoption of information and communication technology (ICT) has added value to the practices of good governance. With emergence of ICT it is possible to locate service centers closer to the clients. Some authors contend that E-governance may be seen as a wider concept that goes beyond the simple service provision to build external interactions. It is an integrated approach that not only integrates the internal processes of government but also people (citizens, Businesses, Non-government organizations) in the service of achieving good governance objectives (Howard, 2001 and Bannister and Walsh, 2002). E-governance promises to deliver to all citizens improved services, reliable information and greater knowledge in order to facilitate access to the governing process and encourage better citizen participation.

E-government has broken the barriers within the government and between the governments. The rise of digital economy and the globalization of information knowledge, compel governments around the globe to meet new expectations and priorities of citizens and businesses. E-governance should help in empowering citizens, businesses, and workers.

Literature Review

There is a paucity of research exploring E-Governance in Arab countries. Many

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authors have pointed out digital divide (Chatfield & Alhujran, 2009) and also underlined various others impediments such as highly bureaucratic nature of government agencies and rarely trained human resource (Al-Nuaim, 2008). The study conducted by Al-Nuaim (2009) also found that Arab municipal Web sites were not citizen centered, suffered from fundamental problems and had limited interactive services. Ciborra and Navarra (2005) examined the early design of e-government solutions in Jordan and found that implementing a general standardized ICT portfolio to support good governance proved to be a difficult task. Awan (2007) studied the government-to-business (G2B) aspect of Dubai e-government and found that businesses often didn't use e-government services for business transactions. One of the reasons include that online response to business queries was very slow.

Chatfield and Alhujran (2009) conducted a cross-country comparison of e-government websites and portals in 16 Arab countries. It was revealed that Arab countries lag behind more developed nations in terms of e-government service delivery capability. A wide digital divide was found among the Arab countries in terms of advanced e-government services. Zaied, Khairalla, and Al-Rashed (2007) investigated the perceptions of towards the IT environment in public organizations in Kuwait and found that less than half of the participants agreed that their organizations had adequate appropriate connectivity, infrastructure, and IT human skills to implement the e-government system. Belwal and Al-Zoubi (2008) assessed the public centric e-governance in Jordan and highlighted many impeding forces such as digital divide, corruption, social bottlenecks, lack of marketing to stakeholders, citizen's lack of adoption of technology.

The review of above studies underscores the challenges faced by Arab countries with regard to the e-governance readiness. Though there is debate on the factors which restrain the e-readiness of Arab countries, however, there is a need to take a consolidated view of the state of the Arab world e-readiness. The current study presents a conceptual model (see Figure 1) in order to improve our understanding of restraining and driving forces which may impede or facilitate the Arab world e-readiness.

Method

The current study draws upon both secondary and primary data. The sources of secondary data include reports published by the United Nation Survey (2005, 2008 & 2010), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) in order to assess the e-governance readiness of the governments of Arab World. Another purpose of this approach is to use this assessment as a benchmark tool to monitor the advancement of Arab governments in implementing e-governance services.

Interview Protocol & Data Analysis Procedure

The sources of primary data include semi-structured face-to-face interviews with professional expatriates and locals in the UAE. A total of thirty individuals

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were interviewed. The interviewees included IT Director, project managers, operational staff, and academicians. Each interview lasted on an average of one and half hour. An interview protocol was developed containing a variety of open-ended questions. The questions were developed considering different dimensions of e-governance readiness. The data were collected over the period of two months during Jan and Feb 2011. During the interview, detailed notes were taken.

In order to assess the e-governance readiness of Arab world, a thematic analysis of interview transcripts was performed in order to find common themes. Thematic analysis helps in identifying common themes through in-depth examination of data (Gifford, 1998). The review of the interview transcripts revealed statements that linked to the identified themes.

Selected Indices

The following indices were some of E-government development indices (EGDI) which were chosen to shed light on how far the application of information and communication technologies among Arab States has improved accessibility of services to citizens, improved the transactions with citizens and business, and the involvement of citizens in public policy through better access to information:

1. E-Government Readiness
2. Web Measurement Assessment
3. E-Participation

E-government Readiness Index in Arab World

The use of modern information and communication technologies (ICTS) in the public sector has created new perceptions about government and governance. Governments are looking for e-government to provide support for public sector reforms and good governance. E-government as a concept integrates the internal and the external components of connected governance. Internally, it has helped of creating more efficient functioning of government operations and externally had improved the interaction with citizens and businesses (United Nation Survey, 2008, 2010). Because of such promising benefits of e-government, this study has added this indicator for purpose to provide a comparative analysis of the extent by which the application of ICTs among Arab governments has contributed to building a better system of service delivery, improved transactions with citizens and businesses, and the empowerment of citizens through better access to information. In this section, I divide the Arab countries by Sub region and provided evidence of their readiness toward the interaction and transaction with citizens and the private sector.

The E-government index of Arab countries in Tables (1,2, and 3) is shown by two groups, the Western Asian Arab countries and the North African Arab countries. The E-government index (EGI) of the Western Asian Arab countries increased from 0.4384 in 2005 to 0.4857 in 2008 and then declined slightly to 0.4757 in 2010 (Table 3). As a group they are above World average (0.4267, 0.4514, and 0.4406) of the same period. When compared to World average in 2010, 7 out of 11 Western

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Asian Arab countries managed to exceed the World average. The EGI of the North African Arab countries also increased during the same period but their averages were below their Arab counterpart in Western Asian and World average (Table 3). The breakdown of e-government readiness Arab countries by these two Sub regions is shown in Table 1 and 2. Within those two sub regions, there was significant gap between countries in e-government readiness index. United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia showed significant progress compared to other Arab countries in the same Sub region and their scores in EGI exceeded the World average (Table 1). Arab countries within the North African Sub region showed inconsistent progress, with exception of Egypt which shows better score compared to rest of countries in that Sub region (Table 2). Contrasting Arab countries by region, Table 3 shows significant gap in performance with Arab countries located in Western Asian outperform their counterpart in North African region by more than (10) points. Most Arab countries in the Western Asian Sub region improved their e-government readiness indexes for aforementioned period with exception of Syria, Iraq and Yemen. Among the Arab North African Sub region only Egypt and Tunisia show good progress in score compared to World average score in e-government readiness. The EGI for both countries in 2010 was 0.4518 and 0.4826 respectively. Tunisia and Bahrain are the most prominent countries among all Arab list to move up 58 positions and 39 positions respectively from their 2008 ranks of 124th and 42nd. The data in Tables (1,2,and 3) indicates that most Arab countries have recognized the essential role of using technology to modernize the public sector's view of the needs of the citizens and the private sector. In order to document the real transformation of the public sector in Arab countries from a bureaucratic form to a people-centric view, the next section assesses the national web sites of these countries and evaluates their online service delivery index.

Table 1: Western Asian Arab Countries e-government readiness index 2005/2008/2010

No.	Country	Index 2005	Index 2008	Index 2010	Global Ranking in		
					2005	2008	2010
1	UAE	0.5718	0.6301	0.5349	42	32	49
2	Bahrain	0.5282	0.5723	0.7363	53	42	13
3	Jordan	0.4639	0.5480	0.5278	68	50	51
4	Qatar	0.4895	0.5314	0.4928	62	53	62
5	Kuwait	0.4431	0.5202	0.5290	75	57	50
6	Saudi Arabia	0.4105	0.4935	0.5142	80	70	53
7	Lebanon	0.4560	0.4840	0.4388	71	74	93
8	Oman	0.3405	0.4691	0.4576	112	84	82
9	Syria	0.2871	0.3614	0.3103	132	119	133

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10	Iraq	0.3334	0.2690	0.2996	118	151	136
11	Yemen	0.2125	0.2142	0.2154	154	164	164

Table 2: North African Arab Countries e-government readiness index 2005/2008/2010

No.	Country	Index 2005	Index 2008	Index 2010	Global Ranking in		
					2005	2008	2010
1	Egypt	0.3793	0.4767	0.4518	99	79	86
2	Tunisia	0.3310	0.3458	0.4826	121	124	66
3	Libya	0.3091	0.3546	0.3799	000	120	114
4	Algeria	0.3242	0.3515	0.3181	123	121	131
5	Morocco	0.2794	0.2944	0.3287	138	140	126
6	Sudan	0.2370	0.2186	0.2542	150	161	154

Table 3: Comparison of e-government readiness index 2005/2008/2010

	2005	2008	2010
Western Asia Arab Countries	0.4384	0.4857	0.4757
North African Arab Countries	0.3098	0.3403	0.3692
World Average	0.4267	0.4514	0.4406

Web Measure and Online services

The strategic objective of web measurement assessment is to measure the online presence of government national websites. It is intended to provide governments with a comparative ranking on their abilities to deliver services to its citizens. There are a couple of models that have proposed to capture the evolution of e-government services (Benchmarking e-government, 2002; Matthias and Gaelle, 2003; Kaaya, 2004; Okot-Uma and Rogers 2004). In order to demonstrate the ability by which national Arab States provide online services to their citizens, this study has adopted the five stage of e-governance model of the United Nations e-government surveys 2005, 2008 and 2010*. These surveys provides a comparative assessment of the performance and ranking of 192 United Nations Member States on how the public sector has responded to the demands of citizens for excellent services and products through the use of the most innovative ICTs (Kerby, 2010). To assess the online presence of national websites and to meet the growing needs of citizens for different types of information and services, the author gathered and displayed two types of data. Table 4 shows the scores and ranking of Arab States by web Measure index and Table 5 presents the percentage and points of utilization and ranking of online service delivery. Table 4 shows the progress made by Arab States in Web Measure Index. Most

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Arab States with exception of Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen, have made good improvement on the online presence of their national Websites. Some Arab countries have made good improvements in Web Measure Index and climbed in their positions in 2008 compared with 2005. Those are UAE, Bahrain, Jordan, Qatar, Kuwait and Oman. UAE followed by Jordan lead other Arab States in this index. Based on United Nations e-government survey of 2008, the Highest Score in this Index is 1.0 which has obtained by USA. This survey shows that UAE and Jordan have scored (0.7157), (0.6054) respectively in Web measure index and this means that both have undertaken a good renovation of their national portal since the last survey in 2005. Other Arab States which reflect renovation in their national portals in 2008 in descending orders are Bahrain (0.5201), Oman (0.4849), Saudi Arabia (0.4649), Kuwait (0.4147), Qatar (0.3913) and Syria (0.2408). These improvements can be interpreted of the good efforts by the governments of these countries in investing in infrastructure, education, citizen-friendly portals and online applications. As 2010 e-government survey by UN contains no data on Web Measure Index, I used the online service index to show the ability of Arab States of providing online services to their citizens. The data were extracted from E-government development index which was measured by four components which all together have been summed to 1.0. One of these components was online service. The Republic of South Korea got the highest score in the World of (0.3400), and accumulated 0.8785 in e-government development index. South Korea scored full mark of (1.0) in online services based on 2010 UN e-government survey. Countries with highest scores in online services reflect their strengths in online service provision, social networking with citizens, engaging and empowering them to be part of the governance process. Three Arab States Bahrain (0.2883), Jordan (0.1813) and Kuwait (0.1565) maintained good presence of online data and information to their citizens (table 4 & 5). Although the data in Table 4 & 5 showed some modest progress of some Arab States, but overall Arab States still lagging behind the World trend toward more and better interaction with their citizens.

Table 4: Western Asian Arab Countries Web Measure Index & Online Service Index 2005/2008/2010

No.	Country	Index 2005	Index 2008	Online service Index 2010	Global Ranking in		
					2005	2008	Online service 2010
1	UAE	0.6115	0.7157	0.0853	29	12	95
2	Bahrain	0.4192	0.5201	0.2483	53	44	13
3	Jordan	0.4346	0.6054	0.1813	68	28	22
4	Qatar	0.3269	0.3913	0.0950	62	53	89
5	Kuwait	0.2500	0.4147	0.1565	75	57	36

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6	Saudi Arabia	0.3769	0.4649	0.1058	80	60	67
7	Lebanon	0.3423	0.3913	0.0907	71	74	85
8	Oman	0.1731	0.4849	0.1252	112	52	56
9	Syria	0.0654	0.2408	0.0140	132	119	170
10	Iraq	0.0538	0.1070	0.0518	118	151	122
11	Yemen	0.0962	0.0736	0.0162	154	164	168

Table 2: North African Arab Countries Web Measure index 2005/2008/2010

No.	Country	Index 2005	Index 2008	Online service Index 2010	Global Ranking in		
					2005	2008	Online service 2010
1	Egypt	0.4462	0.6054	0.1803	99	28	86
2	Tunisia	0.1538	0.1304	0.1641	121	124	66
3	Libya	0.0000	0.0803	0.0464	000	120	138
4	Algeria	0.2462	0.3515	0.0335	123	121	145
5	Morocco	0.2385	0.2074	0.0810	138	140	99
6	Sudan	0.1615	0.0635	0.0529	150	161	127

Table 5: Online Service Index

No.	Country	2005		2008		2010	
		% of Utilization	Global Rank	Points of Utilization	Global Rank	% of Utilization	Global Rank
1	UAE	58.03	32	214	12	25.08	99
2	Bahrain	39.78	67	155.5	44	73.02	8
3	Jordan	41.24	63	181	28	53.33	22
4	Qatar	31.02	79	117	81	27.94	90
5	Kuwait	23.72	103	124	73	46.03	36
6	Saudi Arabia	35.77	73	139	59	31.11	75
7	Lebanon	32.48	77	117	80	26.67	93
8	Oman	16.42	128	145	52	36.83	55
9	Syria	6.20	161	72	125	4.13	170
10	Iraq	5.11	168	32	155	15.24	131
11	Yemen	9.12	153	22	161	4.76	167

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12	Egypt	42.34	59	181	29	53.02	23
13	Tunisia	14.60	139	39	149	48.25	30
14	Libya	0.00	185	24	160	13.65	135
15	Algeria	23.36	104	67	128	9.84	148
16	Morocco	22.63	106	62	133	23.81	104
17	Sudan	15.33	135	19	171	15.56	129

- The UN e-Government survey 2005 contains data on Web Measure Index and Ranking.
- The UN e-government survey 2008 contains data on Web Measure index. The ranking is calculated by the Author.
- The UN e-government survey 2010 contains no data on Web Measure Index and ranking. The UN replaced the Web Measure Index with Online service Index. The Author used Online Service index as approximate measure of the ability of Member States to deliver online services to their citizens and calculate the online service index ranking.

E – Participation

E-participation opens the gate toward knowledge sharing attitude on the part of government employees and the citizens' rights for information. E-participation is meant to assess the quality, usefulness and relevancy of the information and the willingness of governments to involve citizens in public policy making through the use of e-government initiatives (Kerby, 2008). It is not only to locate service centers and to carry out decisions related to service provisions but to simplify governance for government, citizens and businesses. While the Web Measure index assesses the availability of information and services to the public, e-participation measures the usefulness of these services to fulfill the public's needs and expectations and to facilitate a speedy, transparent and accountable government administration. E-participation index contains three benchmarks, namely E-information, E-consultation, and E-decision making. Taken together, these benchmarks measure the degree of the country strength in e-participation. E-information measure the extent to which the national government provide information on the internet to be used as the basis of citizens' participation. E-consultation is the back and forth interaction between the government and its citizens. The focus is on the stakeholder interaction. E-decision making provides evidence of the real changes in public policies as resulted from citizens' inputs and feedback (Kerby, 2008; Adeyemo, 2011). This section uses the UN e-participation index (UN e-government survey, 2005, 2008, 2010) as an important and valuable means to provide an overview of the current performance of the Arab countries in e-participation.

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Breakdown of data on each component of e-participation are only found for specific selected countries and most of them are Western countries and therefore the data are not shown a breakdown by these three benchmarks rather it shows one single score referring to e-participation index. The author uses UN, EPI (E-Participation Index) for the above period to gauge the best performing Arab countries on this index with the reference to the best practices found in other countries.

Table (6) below shows how Arab governments have performed in EPI in 2010 compared to 2008 and 2005. The highest value of EPI is 1.0 and was earned by the Republic of South Korea in 2010 and came second in 2008 after USA. Most European countries, including, Canada are among the top 20 countries in EPI in 2008 and 2010. Bahrain is the only Arab countries stand out for embracing the concept of e-participation and show a remarkable move in the global ranking and moved 25 steps in EPI between the period 2008 and 2010. Bahrain leaded other developing countries and Arab States and climbed from 36 to 11 globally in this index. As can be seen in Table 6, about 65% of the Arab countries surveyed in this study were found in the score ranges between 0.00 and 0.20 in 2010. This percentage was shrunken in 2008 by the margin of more than 25% of the majority of Arab countries. In 2005, the highest score in EPI was recorded by UAE and it was 0.1270. In this same year, almost all Arab States were showing a poor score in EPI and they were far from incorporating the online services tools to promote the participation and engagement of their citizens in public policy process (See Table 6). The number of the Arab countries in the score ranges 0.20 – 0.29 has dropped by 7 countries in 2010 compared to 2008. Despite of the overall decline in EPI in most of the Arab countries in 2010 compared to 2008, however there were remarkable achievements of some Arab countries. The top 6 Arab countries measured by EPI global ranks from 2008 to 2010 are compared over time in Table 6. The range of the 2010 EPI global ranks of the Arab countries in Table 6 is between 11 (Bahrain) and 53 (Kuwait). The number of Arab countries in the top 6 EPI performers list which showed strong performance by climbing in a range of 7 positions (Egypt) and 113 positions (Tunisia) between 2008 and 2010 is 6; whereas, 11 countries recorded declines between 5 positions (Algeria) and 75 positions (Iraq) in their global ranks in the same period. Among the Arab countries in the top 6 EPI performers list, the most attractive-attention performance came from Tunisia by rising 113 positions from 152nd place in 2008 to 39th place in 2010, followed by Kuwait which climbed 63 positions from 116th place in 2008 to 53rd in 2010. When the EPI Global rank changes of the Arab Countries from 2008 to 2010 considered; only 7 out of the 17 countries surveyed increased their ranks. The remaining 10 out of 17 recorded falls in their ranks. Table 6 also reveals that there is no association between the financial position of the country and the EPI. With exception of Bahrain, Kuwait, most oil rich countries such as (Iraq, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman,

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Libya, and Algeria) have not fare well in EPI.

Table 6: E-participation Index in Arab Countries

No.	Country	2005		2008		2010	
		Index Value	Global Rank	Index Value	Global Rank	Index Value	Global Rank
1	UAE	0.1270	36	0.2955	41	0.1286	86
2	Bahrain	0.0476	41	0.3409	36	.06714	11
3	Jordan	0.0476	41	0.5455	15	0.2857	42
4	Qatar	0.0476	41	0.1818	71	0.1286	86
5	Kuwait	0.0000	44	0.0682	116	0.2286	53
6	Saudi Arabia	0.0635	40	0.3182	38	0.1000	102
7	Lebanon	0.1111	37	0.4091	28	0.2714	45
8	Oman	0.0159	43	0.2045	60	0.1571	76
9	Syria	0.0000	44	0.0455	135	0.0143	157
10	Iraq	0.0000	44	0.2045	60	0.0429	135
11	Yemen	0.0000	44	0.0000	170	0.0429	135
12	Egypt	0.0794	39	0.2500	49	0.2857	42
13	Tunisia	0.0000	44	0.0227	152	0.3000	39
14	Libya	0.0000	44	0.2045	60	0.1714	68
15	Algeria	0.0317	42	0.0227	152	0.0143	157

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16	**Morocco**	**0.0317**	**42**	**0.0000**	**170**	**0.1286**	**86**
17	**Sudan**	**0.0317**	**42**	**0.2045**	**60**	**0.1000**	**102**

3. E-Governance in Arab Countries: Reality and Challenges

This section discusses and analyzes two issues of e-governance in Arab countries. The current status of e-governance in Arab countries which relies on data and information published in relevant articles and UN reports of 2008 & 2010. The second issue covers the challenges which are extracted through face to face interaction with some professional expatriates and locals in UAE.

With advent of information age, the rise of digital economy, and the globalization of knowledge, governments around the World are modernizing themselves to meet the new expectations of citizens and businesses. The UN broad definition of e-government emphasized the dynamics role of governments to meet not only the citizen's need of information and services but their active engagement and participation on EG initiative. Most of developing countries in general and Arab States in particular have enacted of an e-government policy focusing mainly on service delivery process with almost complete ignorance to the role of the public on decision making process (Bin Salamat, Bin Hassan and Bin Muhammed, 2011, UN Report, 2010). The establishment of a democratic culture means creating institutional framework that encourages day-to-day interactions between both the public and private institutions to better mange the resources of a country at all levels, national and local. In a study by D. Kaufman, et.al., from the World Bank (2001) of the Mediterranean countries which include 8 Arab States, has constructed six indicators of such culture, namely: voice and accountability; political stability; government effectiveness; regulatory quality; rule of law; and control of corruption. All Arab countries under this study scored low in all indicators. According to this study, political participation is limited and citizens' ability to participate in the selection of the government is restricted. As Tables 1 through 5, reveal some good efforts made by few Arab countries in e-government readiness and web measure index but this does not commensurate with the performance of Western democratic countries and some well practices of some developing countries and at the same time does not guarantee the real involvement of the public in decision making process. This finding is substantiated in Table 6 which reveals that most Arab countries have showed low penetration of the public in e-government initiative. With exception of Bahrain, none of the Arab countries reached the level of 0.6 in e-government readiness index. The Web Measure Index which reflects the five stages of e-government model reveals that some

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progress made by few Arab countries such UAE, Bahrain, Jordan, Qatar, Oman and Egypt where government services and information are now delivered, but again the delivery of services without encouraging participatory deliberative decision making means that Arab Websites are still not fully integrated. With exception of UAE, and Egypt, the scores of most Arab countries ranged between 0.06 Sudan and 0.52 Bahrain (United Nations Survey, 2008).

Another index used by UN to measure the online presence of the home pages of government institutions is Online Service Index (OSI). In 2010, the OSI was substituting the formerly known index called "Web Measure Index". This index is one among three components of the E-Government Development Index (EGDI). South Korea held the first position by scoring a full mark of (1.0000). The top 20 countries are all from Western countries, except Singapore, Malaysia beside South Korea. A country strength in online service provision correlates positively with its use of e-participation or what some literature call e-dormancy, e-consultation or online public engagement (Whyte & Macintosh, 2002; Coleman & Gotze, 2001; Bin Salamat, Bin Hassan and Bin Muhammed, 2011). Table 5 exhibits the Arab countries in term of their OSI rank changes from 2005 to 2010. Of the 17 Arab countries, 8 of them managed to move their positions upwards, while the other 9 recorded decline in their online presence performance. From the 9 countries recorded increase in OSI, four countries have made remarkable recognition, namely, Bahrain, Jordan, Egypt & Tunisia. The last three countries are not among oil rich Arab countries. Bahrain is the only Arab country in the Top list which has global rank of 8 in 2010. Bahrain was cited by UN E-government survey of 2010 among the seven countries in which citizens can pay registration fees, fines, etc. via transactional e-services that cater to many segments of its society. Other cited examples of online payments were the e-dirham initiative in UAE and e-payment gateway in Jordan (Sha'ban, 2006). Jordan, Egypt and Tunisia are also among Arab countries which showed good improvements in the online services and ranked 22nd, 23rd and 30th respectively. Tunisia is the most notable climber in the top 10 list to move up 119 positions from 149th in 2008 to 30th in 2010. Despite the enactment of e-payment in the some Arab countries, however, the percentage of the transactions conducted through the e-services is low. In UAE only 9% of the total transactions are performed using e-services (UAEInteract, 2009). Some Interviewees attributed this low level of utilizing online transactions to the lack of regulations for electronic payment or data transfer and to the role the public sector marketing in enhancing the awareness and the trust among the users of the e-transactions. With exception of few countries noticed above, the global United Nation reports of 2005, 2008, and 2010, cited a static to low achievement of Arab States from the perspective of people participation. In 2005 the highest score in EPI was 0.12 and in 2010 the average score of more than 65% of Arab Countries was only 0.10. According to one scholar, most Arab countries have

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tried to deliver their services to citizens through ICT, however, the implementation focused on publishing information and services with little actual transactional services. The non exhaustive infrastructure in term of access facility and lack of awareness were cited as the obstacles that complicate the delivery of a service and prevent the people feedback of government e-services. Good governance should proceeds the application of ICTs and technology should be used as a means of achieving governance objectives. According to one interviewee, governments in Arab countries are still far behind a normative framework of good governance. Lack of stable politics, unclear macro-economic policy, and the dominant of the personalized leadership and the marginalization of legislative and judicial branches are among the cited obstacles for full utilization of e-governance. The recent events demonstrate that there is gap within Arab countries in e-governance and good governance. In other words, the public in these countries are far from real engagement in policy formulation and decision making process and there is a need for using ICTs as a tool for reengineered information systems to meet the governance demands (Sardi & Mlikota, 2002). Few Arab countries have been cited to utilize the e-participation as integral part of e-government and by creating a transparent and an open public administration systems. According to A. Fadi Salem, the Director of the Governance and Innovation Program at Dubai School of Government, only two countries namely, Bahrain and UAE are utilizing the participatory technologies or social networking in governance. Mr. Salem has cited the changing of mindset towards both engaging citizens in policy making and public service delivery as the main obstacle of using technologies in interactions between societies in Arab countries and governments (Moore, 2011). The other cited challenge to e-governance, according to another interviewee is "lack of back-office capability in most Arab public sector organizations". According to another interviewee, public administration workforces lack the required ICTs skills to support accessibility, trust and citizens confidence of e-government initiative. Some Interviewees have casted doubt in staff readiness to handle well the new duties stipulated in e-government projects. According to them, agencies' staffs were not properly trained to use and digitize the available information and make it accessible on-line. Therefore, there is a need to change the internal operations of government organizations for purpose to support the core process of information and service providers and facilitate the interaction between government and both citizens and businesses. Some examples of such accompanying process changes are integrated human resources and payroll system, integrated financial management systems, web-based data resources to improve decision making and intranet system to improve information flows within governmental institutions. The support of back-office and the creation of agile and adaptable workforces were recognized as precondition for developing online services and e-participation (Sardi & Mlikota, 2002; Janowski, 2005). Al-Hiram reported of

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the slow pace of e-government transformation (UAEInteract, 2009) "…. With the exception of high performing nations, on average less than 50 per cent of all internet users access eGovernment data and less than 20 per cent undertake online transactions….." Such slow pace can also be inferred in Humaidan's statement that "…. We aim to include more government departments and agencies in Dubai and achieve integration in the delivery of services through a unified platform, which we believe will contribute significantly to realizing the Dubai Strategic Plan 2015." This is a problem that can and must be addressed, in our view, by extensive skilling of public sector marketing in the UAE in particular and region at large.

Another challenging issue in most Arab countries is the absence of legislation and rules that specify citizens' rights with the respect to information provision and request. To this effect, the governance in a developing country is a challenge because a majority of citizens are educationally & socio-economically challenged. This challenge becomes more much larger as the governors in developing are at times not very clear on various rules and procedures (Singh, 2010). In most Western countries, the public access to information and the duties of agencies to inform citizens about processing personal information was well stipulated in laws and regulations Garson, 2006), while n most Arab countries, according to some interviewees, there is either an absence of such laws and most citizens are not aware of their rights and duties with respect to the provision or request of information. Citizens of these countries are ignorant about their rights of asking the government agencies to rectify data concerning them or requesting data related to economic, social or securities issues. Therefore, institutions wishing to have personal information or using such information must inform individuals of the use of these data. Another related which missing in Arab countries is the role of national parliaments in establishing a website to inform and engage citizens in the democratic process. Some interviewees have raised concern about the lack of citizens' engagement in public policy process. In Arab countries, according to them, the citizens have little awareness about their parliaments; have no direct participation in boards' discussions; and with exception of few countries individuals' voice are never heard. Rectifying such challenges will definitely, enhance the public trust with rule of law, bring more legitimacy of government decisions and provide support for public sector reform. The solution lies in providing a mechanism that is quick, interactive and provides a clear repository of rules and regulations, which extends help in decision making for both the governors and the governed.

It appears that in most of the Arab countries, there is clear absence of laws which allow the general public to gain online access of government deliberation of public policies. The weak parliaments and strong executive leaders in most developing countries and particularly in Arab nations render to the ineffectiveness of the information systems to better represent and connect with the general public. The information systems should be designed within the

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context of the law to make top-level decision-making process rely on the online environment and to leave space to change these systems in years later. Other challenges to e-governance or in other words to citizen participation and engagement are:

Proposed Model- Force-Field Diagram

The proposed model draws upon the force-field analysis approach discussed by Palmer, Dunford, and Akin (2009). The force-field analysis is a model which underscores the factors which could hinder or facilitate change. The hindering forces are labeled as restraining forces and forces which facilitate change are named as driving forces. The main force-field arrow (see Figure 1) underpins the issue of e-governance readiness of the Arab countries. Drawing upon the secondary and primary data, I have compiled the list of restraining and driving forces as shown in Figure 1. Each restraining and driving forces carries an assigned number which depicts the strength of each force. If the number is high, it means that the factor is stronger and if the assigned number is low, the relative strength of that factor is weak.

As shown in the figure 1, the restraining forces are stronger and driving forces are relatively weak. This has resulted in low e-readiness of Arab countries. Potentially, the proposed model will trigger future debates on the restraining and driving forces with particular focus on Arab countries. It suggests actions that can be taken by Arab governments such as decreasing restraining forces increasing driving forces.

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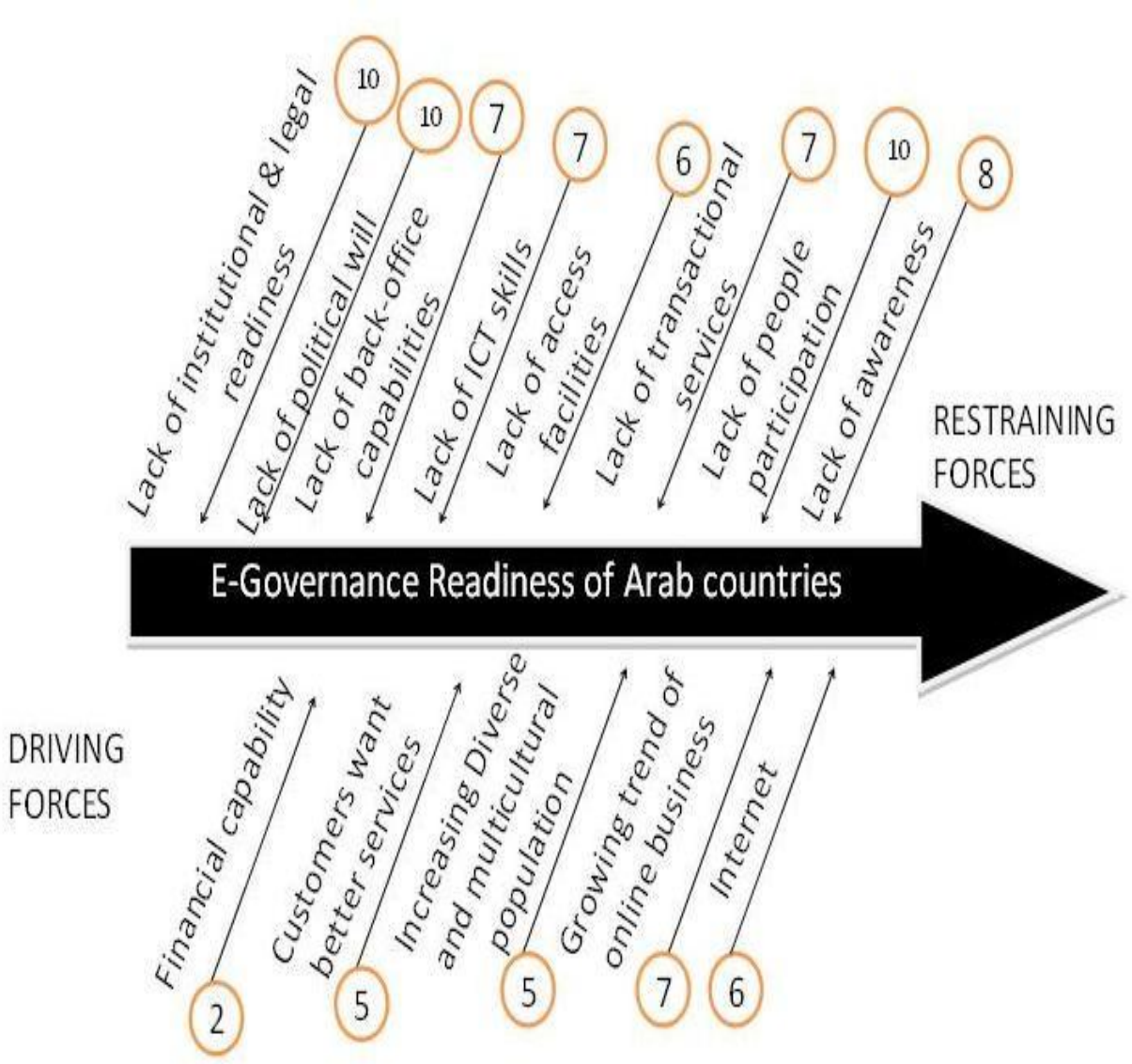
Figure 1
Force-Field Diagram of E-Governance Readiness of Arab Countries



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