

Chapter 29

Egyptian Local Government Website Portals: Examining Maturity Levels and Human Development Indicators

Hisham M. Abdelsalam
Cairo University, Egypt

Christopher G. Reddick
University of Texas at San Antonio, USA

Hatem A. ElKadi
Cairo University, Egypt

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines the development of e-Government in selected Egyptian local governments. A content analysis of 25 local government website portals was conducted examining categories of e-Management, e-Services, e-Democracy, and e-Decision making. The study first sets out to examine the overall level of maturity of local government websites in these four areas in Egypt. Second, this study examines whether Egyptian human development indicators explain the maturity of local government websites. Firstly, the overall results indicated that e-Government maturity in Egypt was primarily in the information dissemination stage. Secondly, local governments had a greater population in social services industries which indicated a greater level of e-Government maturity. Out of 17 variables tested, there were very few human development indicators related to e-Government website maturity. The results of this chapter showed the maturity of e-Government in local governments in a developing country matched against developed nations. Also, the results showed the limited impact of human development indicators to predict e-Government website maturity.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Electronic government, or e-Government, has provided a means through which governments can improve citizen interaction with their government and at the same time change the traditional model of government service delivery (Kraemer & Dedrick, 1997; Lenk & Traunmuller, 2000). In fact, the vital necessity of modernization and the introduction of enhanced business models that replace traditional ones have been realized by governments through e-Government worldwide (Ho, 2002; Moon, 2002).

Technology allows governments to serve citizens in a timely, effective, and cost efficient way (Kraemer & Dedrick, 1997). The key reasons for this public sector reform are to increase the efficiency of government operations, strengthen democracy, enhance transparency, and provide better and more versatile services to citizens and businesses (Ho, 2002; La Porte, Demchak, & de Jong, 2002). Local government, being closer to citizens and their interactions with the various levels of governments, is in a unique position to inform the public of the direction of future policy and to reflect the government's new vision and strategy.

Like many other countries worldwide, the local e-Government initiatives were set off in Egypt to improve the capabilities of enhancing service delivery to their citizens. This is especially the case with a developing country, such as Egypt, where e-Government becomes a mechanism for enhancing a large population to promote further development. When comparing the adoption of e-Government in developed countries with developing nations, their experiences are much different (Chen, et al., 2007).

There generally is limited research on e-Government maturity in developing countries (Ndou, 2004; Dada, 2006; Lau, et al., 2008). This is especially the case for African nations, in which the status of e-Government services is not well documented (Heeks, 2002; Rorissa & Demissie, 2010). Developing countries, especially those in Africa, are said to be among the last to adopt necessary e-Government technologies for service

delivery (Schuppan, 2008). The rate of adoption is slow because of several factors such as lack of appropriate ICT infrastructure, limited literacy, unbalanced economic development, and cultural factors (Rorissa & Demissie, 2010). In addition, there is limited research that examines the relationship between e-Government maturity and human development (Siau & Long, 2004; Siau & Long, 2006; Singh & Das, 2007; Singh, Das, & Joseph, 2007; Siau & Long, 2009). The research that does exist focuses on comparing countries at the national level, while this study focuses on local governments in a specific country, Egypt, at the local government level.

This study expects to find a relationship between human development and e-Government adoption as previous research has shown (Siau & Long, 2004). There is research that stresses the importance of human capital of nations and e-Government development (Srivastava & Teo, 2007). As mentioned, most of the research on human development and e-Government has examined this issue across countries (Kim, 2007; Cortes & Navarro, 2011), and has not focused on human development in the local government context. Human development might take the form of governance and public institution capacity which are said to promote e-Government development in developed nations (von Haldenwang, 2004). In addition, human development has been explored in East Africa through case studies of this region (Kaaya, 2004). However, unlike previous research that examines e-Government and human development, the focus of this study is in a developing country; examining website maturity in the context of local governments, something that has not been explored.

Broadly defined, e-Government is the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to promote more efficient and effective government, facilitate more accessible government services, allow greater public access to information, and make government more accountable to citizens (Traunmuller & Lenk, 2002). E-Government systems are becoming an essential element of modern public

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