Impact of ICT on Arab Youth; Employment, Education and Social Change

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• Future Direction
• Analysis of the impact of ICT through economic, educational and social dimensions;
• Focus is placed on:
  – Employment
  – Education
  – Social development and change
According to the ILO, the world is facing a “youth employment crisis of unprecedented proportions”;
• The Arab region has a 9.7% unemployment rate;
• 13.8% among women;

Youth and Total Unemployment

- Over a period of one decade, youth witnessed a growth rate of 23.6% in the Arab region;
- Shortcomings of the education systems;
- Acquiring skills to match labor market needs;

Challenges
Addressing Arab youth unemployment

→ Demand side determinants: address the scarcity of employment opportunities, approaches for entrepreneurship, and supporting enterprises;
→ Supply side determinants: employ the youth with skills to match the market needs;

Supply Side Determinants

- Cultural and social perspectives on university-level specializations.
ICT in the Economy

• ICT sector: information technology and telecom;
• Global spending: US$4 trillion in 2011 with IT at 41% and Telecom at 59%;
• Share of the region: 2%;

Mobile Sector

• Total economic impact of mobile in 2011 was US$98.1 billion in the middle east and US$34.1 billion in north Africa;
• Mobile sector: 1.12 million related full-time equivalent jobs in the region.
**IT Software & Services**

- Employment in computer software and services varies among countries.
- Examples of the share of computer software and services out of total ICT employment:
  - Jordan 18%
  - Oman 3%

**IT Software & Services**

- One advantage of the IT software and services: off-shoring.
- Off-shoring market at US$ 72 billion in 2011. Only Egypt is mentioned to have a part of that market.
- Only 3.4% of FDI projects were intended for countries in the Arab region.
According to the World Bank’s global financial inclusion index of 2011, only 18% of the population aged 15+ have an account with a formal financial institution;

- The global average is 50%;
- Morocco: 39%
- GCC: 46% and higher
- Microfinance: a key tool for financial inclusion;

Building an entrepreneurial ecosystem for support young entrepreneurs;
- Incubators
- Accelerators
- Venture capital
- Innovation support centers

Main focus is the ICT;
• Enhancing ICTs in education:
  – Use of mobile devices (1:1 model)
  – Proper teacher training on ICTs
  – Developing Open Educational Resources
  – Introducing digital textbooks.
EDUCATION

Education and Employment

Education Systems

Employment
Challenges - Cognitive Skills

• Arab Knowledge Report 2011
  – Surveyed the cognitive skills of secondary school learners
  – Skills relates to acquisition and use of knowledge
• Survey
  – 6,500 students and 505 teachers
  – 4 countries: Jordan, Morocco, UAE and Yemen
  – Measured competency of youth to participate in the Knowledge Society

Cognitive Skills

• 92% were below the success threshold of 50%;
• Lack of skills is compounded by other factors
  – Illiteracy
    • 11% rate
    • 64% are women
  – Inability of teachers to enable students;
  – Traditional education systems.
• Student-to-computer ratio: 6 to 17;
• Limited availability of data;
• Internet-connected schools mostly in GCC and Jordan; other countries lag behind;
• e-Learning initiatives in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt and Jordan.
Mobile Technologies

- Blurring of boundaries between the laptops and mobile devices → heavily used by youth;
- Mobile devices have sufficient computing capability to run educational software. Some educational applications are released for mobile devices only.
- Models adopted by countries:
  → Money spending on content development
  → Subsidizing devices

Education and Employment

- Cognitive skills
  - Matching skills with market needs
- Employment
  - Matching needs of employers
  - Increasing employment opportunities
SOCIAL CHANGE

Social Effects

• A tool to share knowledge and raise awareness:
  – Enable women and marginal groups;
  – Raise awareness on HIV/AIDS;
  – Help the hearing impaired.
Example - Glowork

Adel F. Fakher (Minister of Labor, Saudi Arabia)
The first endorsement from H.E. Fakher:

"I truly believe in the potential of Saudi females in our labor market. Glowing is one of many initiatives that will assist in increasing the diversity ratio in the workplace.

METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS
Problematicity of Impact

- Tracking the changes which occurred in society as a result of ICT use is inherently difficult;
- To track change requires a baseline – which rarely exist in advance;
- Usage surveys and perceptions of causality are much more common.

Economic vs. Social

- Available data suggests that important social effects exist;
- Economic data is generally more broadly available → research bias;
- Researchers rarely possess both social and economic analysis skills, which creates an artificial tendency to separate research which is actually highly integrated.
Other Examples of ICT and Arab Youth

ICT and Youth Study

Understanding the impact of technology on Qatar’s youth

More so than ever before, technology has transformed the way younger generations communicate and access information. In recognition of this tremendous influence ICT has on children and young adults, ICTQATAR has commissioned a comprehensive study to understand how Qatar youth are affected by and use ICT in their daily lives.

A committee of academics, researchers, policymakers, youth advocates and young people will contribute to a ground-breaking analysis using data from 1,500 young Qataris aged 11 to 26. Through focus group exercises, online content and communications with each other, the findings will provide insight into how ICT shapes their identity in relation to their peers and the world.

From these findings, ICTQATAR will be able to make policy recommendations on how to best harness the power of ICT to help young people realize their full potential, and develop a framework to assess the impact of ICT on youth which can then be replicated in other Arab countries. Furthermore, the baseline information this study provides can be used in the future to provide a comparative assessment of the socio-economic impact of ICT on the age group.

Upon completion of the study, findings will be made available.

The Arab Social Media Report series aims to inform a better understanding of the impact of social media on development and growth in the Arab region by exploring the following questions:

- What are the generation trends of social networking services in the Arab region?
- What is the growth rate, and what is the demographic and gender breakdown?
- What factors affect the adoption of these platforms in different Arab countries (e.g., income, youth population, digital access, Internet freedom, etc.)?
- What is the impact of these phenomena on citizen engagement and social inclusion?
- What is the impact of the new social dynamics influenced by social media on innovation and entrepreneurship in Arab societies?

The Role of Social Media in Arab Women’s Empowerment

Overview

The societal and political transformations sweeping the Arab region have empowered large segments of the region’s population. Many stereotypes have been shattered, with Arab youth, “women” and women becoming the main drivers for regional change. Arab women in particular have become more engaged in political and civic actions, playing a critical healing role in the rapid and historic changes that have swept the region. Meanwhile, the debate about the role of social media in these transformations has reached policy-making circles at the regional and global levels.

Throughout 2011, social media usage continued to grow significantly across the Arab world, coupled with major shifts in usage trends. From merely being used as a tool for social networking and entertainment, social media now infiltrates almost every aspect of the daily lives of millions of Arabs, affecting the way they interact socially, do business, interact with government, or engage in civil society movements. By the end of 2011, Arab users’ utilization of social media had evolved to encompass civic engagement, political participation, entrepreneurial efforts, and social change. With a critical mass of Arab users in many
Other Examples of ICT and Arab Youth

CONCLUSION

RECOMMENDATIONS
Recommendations

• Mainstream ICTs into well-thought initiatives, especially in education;
• Improve the educational system to match skills with market needs;
• Improve financing of young entrepreneurs and MSEs in ICT;
• Accelerate the pace of digitization (expected impact between 2012 and 2020 is US$820m in additional nominal GDP);

THANK YOU