E-government in light of the Corona (Covid 19) pandemic: a reading of the UAE e-government experience.

Dr- Ladjel Radia, University of Costantine 3 Salah Boubnidar (Algeria) *

radia.ladjel@univ-constantine3.dz

https://orcid.org/0009-0004-2150-0917

Abstract:

In this paper, we will examine e-government as a new topic to enrich information and give it comprehensive concepts and images on this topic. The importance of this research comes from the growing interest of Governments and relevant international organizations in the subject of e-government and the facilities needed to implement these projects through rapid facilitation of the flow of information to those in need. One of the most successful experiences is the e-government experience in the UAE. This paper highlights the UAE's e-government experience as a leader in the Arab world. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has achieved outstanding status as a leading e-government country. This is in the circumstances of the coronavirus outbreak in the world. This paper highlights the reality and trends of e-government as one of the most important mechanisms that have contributed to reducing the epidemic's impacts.

* Ladjel Radia

Introduction:

Today's world is facing a great deal of knowledge and information development, which has posed itself as one of the challenges for decision makers at the highest level, in the development of various information tools and technologies that have touched the various fields of government. The majority of the world's countries have begun to develop their policies in accordance with the requirements of today and in order to ensure the performance of their functions as efficiently as possible, especially in the government sector, which has always been characterized by bureaucracy and multiple complications in the actions required. and thus began thinking about the shift towards e-government aimed at creating a smart society with sophisticated, fast, low-cost and security services for citizens, government and business enterprises, Since the COVID-19 pandemic began to emerge, most of the world's countries are experiencing a major health crisis, especially in countries where the pandemic has spread so much and has taken so many human lives. These human losses have forced various governments to take many possible measures and policies to curb the spread of this pandemic.

Working to strictly implement distancing measures among citizens, which has made ICT critical to the success of epidemic reduction policies and measures by encouraging e-government as an alternative option in connecting government to its citizens to avoid crowding out public administrations responsible for service delivery. Digital technologies have allowed governments to play a key role in addressing the challenges surrounding the global health crisis and have created essential linkages during the growing period of isolation.

On this basis, the main question of the research topic is as follows:

How does e-government affect the facilitation of public services given the UAE's experience?

Before going into the details of the UAE Experience Directive on E-Government

Its efforts to contain coronavirus and challenges, it is necessary first to identify e-government, and this definition will include fundamentals, linking e-government to the coronavirus pandemic.

1. What is e-government.

For the purpose of clarifying the most important points relating to the conceptual aspect of e-government, we address the identification of both the definition and relevance of e-government and how it is built.

1.1 Definition of e-government.

In their quest to define e-government, writers and researchers used many terms that were unclear because they meant different things to many party groups, and thus the definitions of e-government ranged from a simple narrow definition to a broad and complex concept. (Riyadh Abdullah & Feras Suleiman)

The most important definitions of e-government include:

E-government defines it as exploiting the power of ICT for the purpose of the effectiveness and quality of public services, as well as stimulating the relationship between clients, citizens and public bodies. (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2003)

It is defined as the application and use of so-called ICT in government agencies, its full and effective investment in facilitating government services and efficiently strengthening relations with the public and many government units around the world. (Mahmoud, 2010)

The concept of e-government reflects governments' quest to reinvent themselves, but in the economy they effectively perform interconnected global functions across the network and e-Governments that are only a radical shift in the ways in which governments operate on a scale not seen since the beginning of the industrial era. (Khaled Abd Qader)

Thus, e-government is divided into three areas:

E-governance, e-democracy and e-society.

If e-governance is concerned with improving administrative procedures and the consequent provision of electronic services in public administration, e-democracy is competent to provide electronic tools for political participation in debates related to computer or electronic elections and others, and the electronic community includes other parties such as non-profit organizations, associations and others. (Noufel & Hanan , 2017)

Thus, e-government has three dimensions:

First: Electronic services: Where citizens' government services are provided via the Internet.

Second: Electronic governance: the use of high-tech software and applications to improve performance efficiency in order to streamline the workflow procedures within government bodies in a way that reflects the speed and efficiency of the service provided.

Third: Electronic commerce: payment process for services obtained by a citizen such as payment of telephone bills, payment for extraction of birth certificate, payment of traffic violations, government bids...

1.2. The importance of e-government.

Among the most important advantages of e-government coupled with speed in building a knowledge-based economy and shaping the knowledge society are :

- There is no room for mediation or bribery.
- E-government's ability to provide integrated electronic public services.
- Build local skills and thus increase employment opportunities. (Nurddine & Surya , 2014)
- Governments have been under constant pressure from citizens and beneficiaries in general to meet the growing demands for government services, owing to the growing population, the high standard of living, the desire to improve the quality of service, accelerate transactions and eradicate red tape and bureaucracy.
- Accelerating technological progress and the associated knowledge revolution, which requires keeping pace with progress and using it in various areas of life to realize its benefits for a large number of scientific applications.
- Global liberation movements demanding greater freedom, participation, openness and respect for human rights have contributed to radical changes in societal construction, accompanied by increased awareness, social expectations and the emergence of new visions for the public sector to improve its performance in delivering its public services.
- Responding and interacting with modern environmental requirements to follow evolution and avoid isolation and keep up with the age of speed and informatics. (zein & Svian)

1.3. Building e Government.

To establish an electronic government, a set of basic technical, organizational, administrative, legal and human requirements must be provided as follows: (zein & Svian , pp. 6-7)

1- Solving the problems that exist before moving to the electronic environment. The government must provide the necessary information to its citizens via the Internet. There must be a policy whereby all government documents, information and models are identified directly via the Internet. In this context, the biggest problem that can be encountered when the e-government project is initiated is the problems of authentication that exist in reality.

2-   Providing appropriate structures and strategies to build societies. Building societies requires an interactive online broker that activates communication between government institutions and citizens.

2.   The fundamentals of e-government.
2.1.   Pillars of e-government.

E-government in general focuses on three main groups: citizens, companies, enterprises and government various government agencies and sectors, whose objectives can be limited to the following areas: (Sarah , 2017)

1-   Government-grassroots sphere towards citizens:

In the area of the government's relationship with its citizens, most of the objectives of e-government will fall under the heading of citizen welfare and participation in governance. In the first strategic objective, the government can deliver the service to the citizen rather than to him using the Internet and communications technology. E-government systems in the field of e-voting and e-elections help to expand popular participation in the democratic process, It was done by filing complaints and contacting officials directly without media via e-mail, etc.

2-   Institutional Government vis-à-vis enterprises:

E-government aims to stimulate the economic cycle by facilitating business transactions, whether local or global, by reducing complexities, reducing costs and providing communication channels between government and investors.

3-   Government-Government sphere Government departments among themselves:

At the internal government level, the aim of e-government will be to bridge the data and procedural gap between various ministries and public departments, as well as to raise levels of efficiency, effectiveness and performance in internal government procedures and regulations.

4-   Government-External Field:

One of the most important objectives of e-government in this area is to integrate the government in a streamlined and economically viable manner with its external surroundings tourism by providing tourism services and information about the country to foreign tourist businesses or foreign citizens, Promoting external investment is also one of the detailed objectives in this area, by explaining laws and providing information to encourage investment.

2.2.   E-government success strategies.

The successful implementation of e-government in its broad sense is based on many foundations that states and governments must prepare and number, perhaps the most important of which is the formulation of effective strategies that integrate them to achieve that success.

The following table shows e-government's success strategies and various contents:

content	strategy
- Amending the Government's Agenda. - Provision of a supervisory body. - Smart plans and targets. - Business process re-engineering. - Building a legal environment.	Planning and management strategies
- Community containment. - Reduce the cost of service access.	Service Access Service Strategies
- Formulation of government content. - Development of standard information forms for government transactions.	Content strategies
- Infrastructure development. - Adoption of the principle of e-government portal. - Secure confidentiality and security of information. - Enabling electronic payment.	Technical strategies
- Awareness-raising campaigns to promote e-government. - Respect for privacy. - Training courses.	Participation and public awareness strategies

Source: Fars Suleiman al-Shalabi and Riyadh Abdullah al-Khawalda, E-Government Role in Enhancing Organizational Effectiveness Case Study of Jordan's Ministry of Finance, Amman University, p 9.

The idea of e-government is based on four basic pillars: (Sarah , 2017, p. 3)

1.   Clustering all information, interactive and exchange activities and services in one place is the official government website in an activity similar to the idea of government agencies.
2.   Achieve a state of constant communication with the public to ensure all the information and service needs of the citizens.
3.   Achieving the speed and effectiveness of linking, coordinating, performing and delivering between the Government's own departments and each of them.

4.   Achieve an abundance of expenditure in all components, including better benefits from government activities with commercial content.

3. E-government and coronavirus pan.

The COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic is one of the most difficult and fierce crises facing governments and humanitarian communities worldwide, and has cast a dark shadow on the path and growth of many development businesses and sectors.

The coronavirus pandemic has isolated many in their homes and disrupted the usual working practices of governments around the world.

The coronavirus has demonstrated the urgent need to adopt digitization in providing services to citizens under quarantine, some of which, although some of which exist, have not been used in the required manner imposed by modern evolution in a time of technological challenge.

The digitization of government services aims to bring the distances between government interests and citizens on the other hand, and to provide real value in social, economic and sustainable development, and as a need to adapt to accelerated changes and deteriorating conditions throughout the science due to the health crisis, the coronavirus pandemic, governments are forced to turn to digitization. (Farid, 2022)

ICT plays an important role in promoting people's safety and preserving the economics of societies, maintaining e-government technologies through information exchange and online service delivery and enabling rapid policy decisions to be made. (Kamal, 2021)

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a real test for governments around the world. Governments have been forced to rethink the state's role and to develop digital solutions to ensure continuity of public services and community stability, often outside the scope of policies and regulations in force. It also tested governments' responsiveness, speed of transition and digital, providing opportunities to strengthen multilevel Government across regional and local jurisdictions and to expand the provision of information and services to all segments of society.

More broadly, CNN carried out a poll entitled ;Telecommunication in the Middle East and North Africa" on the effectiveness of telecommuting during the pandemic and how digital communication has changed business practices, results show that 56% of participants see telework as very effective and hope to continue applying it even after the pandemic. While 20% rated it to be fairly effective, the results showed that the difference in preferred communication between service providers and heads was 42% and 17% of participants saw challenges associated with technology, And the proportion of those who suffed from delayed responses

by their fellow service providers and related heads 14%. The number of challenges related to misunderstandings among communication parties was 13%, as combined these factors affected the quality of work. (CNN Arabic, 2020)

In response to the crisis, and along the same lines, the OECD Report (2020) noted that the role of service providers working in public service sectors in various countries of the world has increased as a result of the coronavirus outbreak. Public administrations are undergoing a huge and unplanned experience. The Organization has therefore published a memorandum containing the basic principles underlying the most common measures that can be taken in the management of General Service staff. These principles focused on allowing for greater flexibility in working and service provider management in terms of performance and productivity in a way that contributes to the preservation of public health and the application of successful innovations telecommuting, the use of new communications and information technologies, the emphasis on electronic channels and digital services, Utilizing manpower redistribution platforms to provide services, and engaging and cooperating between staff and officials of units, teams and ministries responsible for the provision of public service; Focus on basic public service values such as fast delivery, innovation, productivity and client satisfaction and added the importance of considering the strategic dimension that these principles can have in developing mechanisms for future action after the pandemic recedes. (Badriya bint Hamoud & Rashid bin Saif , 2023)

As e-government evolves and socio-economic recovery efforts are accelerated in the post-COVID pandemic, according to the United Nations report for 2022, the survey highlights further progress in global trends in e-government development and the transition in many countries from lower to higher levels of e-government development indicators.

The 2022 version shows that 60 countries have very high e-Government Development Index values, ranging from 75.0 to 1 00.1compared to 57 in 2020 and recording an increase of 3.5 percent for this category.

A total of 73 countries have high e-Government Development Index values ranging in value from 50.0 to 75.0, and 53 countries are part of the medium set of e-Government Development Index, which ranges in value from 25.0 to 50.0. (Badriya bint Hamoud & Rashid bin Saif , 2023, p. 3)

The number of countries providing online services assessed in the survey has increased by 5 per cent since 2020. The number of countries providing services that allow users to apply for social protection programs such as maternity care, child benefits, pensions, housing and food allowances has seen the largest increase and 17 percent, which may have occurred in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. (Badriya bint Hamoud & Rashid bin Saif , 2023, p. 48)

4. Study the UAE experience.

One of the most important factors of concern to the UAE in relation to e-government is the government leadership's desire to develop the operating environment by demonstrating modern technological developments in the various information and communication systems and working to implement them in line with international standards.

As well as seeking to establish policies and legislation, the state is streamlining all public procedures in line with the modern technological era. (Nadia & Naseera)

4.1. Dimensions of national e-government strategy.

The United Arab Emirates has adopted the design of a national digital government strategy in accordance with 8 dimensions, investing in its content the recommendations contained in the framework of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) e-government policy, which is also aligned with the UAE's development plan in the post-COVID-19 era (UAE Digital Government Strategy - 2025, s.d.)

These dimensions are as follows:

- Leave no one behind (promote inclusivity) by:

1- Adopt open and inclusive processes, accessibility, transparency and accountability among the main objectives of the UAE's e-government strategies.

2- Inclusion, overcoming any digital gaps that may arise with a particular focus on senior citizens, people of determination, women, children and vulnerable groups.

- Flexibility and adaptability:

By leveraging emerging capacity-building techniques, to be able to proactively respond to anticipated disasters. It adopts a governmental process approach and flexible core capabilities.

- Commensurate with the digital age:

Strengthen coordination and cooperation between sectors and ministries, identify national priorities and involve stakeholders in pursuing the UAE's digital agenda.

- Focus on user needs:

E-government should be user-centered, make users' needs and comfort key when designing processes, services and policies, and adopt comprehensive mechanisms to ensure user engagement at all stages of designing and developing services and policies.

- Digital by Design:

Establishing clear organizational leadership, with effective coordination and implementation mechanisms to include the term "Digital" in all policy processes as a key and compulsory component of digital transformation and the provision

of clear organizational leadership, effective coordination and innovative implementation mechanisms to promote "Digital" as a mandatory transformative element in various processes and policies and work on ongoing experiences in this aspect by facilitating the establishment of controlled and flexible testing environments to allow regulators, the private sector, innovators and business leaders to collaborate in the creation of legislation that meets the requirements of sustainability and aligns the speed of legislation with the speed of innovation through experimental laboratories and the organization of technologies.

- Data-driven public sector:

Data is a key strategic asset in digital government, and e-government adopts ethical rules and principles for reliable and secure data reuse.

- Promoting the principle of open government:

Public access to government data and policymaking processes.

- Proactive:

This dimension is intended to mean governments' ability to predict and respond quickly enough to the needs of the public, so that the user does not have to provide data and implement other services. It also means a Government that provides services to the client before requesting them in a timely manner and in a manner appropriate to the client's needs and preferences. This is done through the use of a unified digital identity in the design of services, which aims to improve the client's experience and simplify the delivery of services to the client.

4.2.   UAE in e-Government Development Index.

Main index	sub-index	Target 2025
public dissatisfaction	Citizens' satisfaction with digital government services.	90%
	Business satisfaction with digital government services	Very happy with
Complete Digital Transformation	Percentage of services included in the unified digital platform.	90%
	Percentage of fully digitized services.	100%
	Provide a digital option for services that require personal verification.	100%
	Provide a digital option for services requiring manual signature.	100%

Digital capabilities	Number of federal government workers trained in digital government capabilities and standards.	100%
	Number of employees in the federal government with basic knowledge of digital skills.	100%
	Number of federal government workers trained in modern technologies such as artificial intelligence, robot processing, etc.	10%
Digital Adoption	Percentage of operations completed digitally in full.	85%

Source: Official UAE e-government portal, quoting website, https://u.ae/ar-ae/about-the-uae/uae-competitiveness/the-uae-in-egovernment-development-index

The UAE Government Services Strategy aims to provide 90% of government services on a unified platform, 100% proactive personal services, 100% design services in partnership with all segments of the community, and 100% provision of services anywhere and at any construction time by 2023.

The e-government development study is published every two years by the United Nations under the auspices of its Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which assesses the digital growth of the governments of all 193 United Nations Member States.

The study will use the e-government Development Index (EGDI) to assess the development of e-Government at the national level, a composite indicator based on the computational average of three benchmarks: the Electronic Services Index (OSI), the Telecommunications Infrastructure Readiness Index (TII) and the Human Capital Index (HCI I I).

The United Arab Emirates retained the country's ranking of the e-Government Development Index (EGDI 2022) as the first Arab, and jumped to 13th place globally in the UN e-Government Development Index 2022, making a significant jump of 8 positions at once at the global level.

In addition, the United Nations report ranked the United Arab Emirates in a very high category (VH), the highest rating for e-government development around the world. The country also ranked first globally by achieving the full 100% mark in the "Content Delivery" and "Institutional Architecture" benchmarks, which are sub-indicators of the online services index (The official portal of the UAE e-Government, s.d.).

4.3.   UAE efforts to contain coronavirus.

The United Arab Emirates Government has been working to access all federal government services 24 hours a day through a single platform. Whether using a PC, mobile phone or any other smart device, you can get the services a citizen needs at the right time, so that about 34 government entities provide their e-services through those online platforms. (The official portal of the UAE e-Government, s.d.)

In addition, UAE efforts to contain the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the country include disrupting schools and higher education institutions, implementing a distance learning system, and enabling remote work from homes. (The official portal of the UAE e-Government, s.d.)

The Government of the United Arab Emirates has launched several websites dedicated to informing the public about the current situation and COVID-19 developments in the country, health information and guidance to protect themselves and methods of prevention.

The UAE has worked to discontinue many federal and local government agency services requiring in-person attendance and has replaced them with smart remote services. (UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs, UAE.. Efficacy in coronavirus response... Bet on compliance with instructions, s.d.)

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is the top country to confirm its exit from the pandemic.

The country has benefited from significant investments in digital infrastructure, and has employed digital applications in the health sphere to control the coronavirus pandemic. For example, the "fort" mobile app is used to maintain records of tests and vaccinations, as well as facilitate contact tracing. The program "Telemedicine" was also launched to obtain digital health consultations, in response to precautionary and preventive measures, and to prevent infection by reducing the number of auditors in hospitals and health centres. (How did the UAE get out of the coronavirus crisis? , s.d.)

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) based its assessment of the UAE's actions on a detailed report prepared by the Federal Authority for Competitiveness and Statistics (FCA), which included the totality of initiatives, efforts and strategic plans at the state level launched by various government agencies in order to ensure the health and safety of the community through the launching of awareness-raising campaigns, taking practical steps to control the effects of the spread of the virus, thereby reducing the number of infections, Taking into account ensuring continuity of work in critical sectors Energy and Education, Health and Telecommunications and Other Government Services, and Gendarmerie based on a comprehensive report prepared by the Federal Authority for Competitiveness and Statistics in Dubai

May 27, 2020. (OECD commends the UAE's efforts in dealing with the coronavirus crisis, s.d.)

Despite the closure of airports and the suspension of flights, the UAE has not halted its humanitarian flights to a large number of countries affected by the coronavirus crisis. Through the assistance it has sent, the UAE has confirmed its support to all countries without exception.

Despite the closure of airports and the suspension of flights, the UAE has not halted its humanitarian flights to a large number of countries affected by the coronavirus crisis. Through the assistance it has sent, the UAE has confirmed its support to all countries without exception: (The UAE's efforts to combat the coronavirus at the international and local levels, s.d.) Two aircraft carrying relief medical aid have been sent to Iran to help it face the coronavirus crisis.

- The UAE sent two batches of medical aid carrying large quantities of medical and preventive materials to Pakistan.
- The Charity Authority provided assistance to the Palestinian people in the form of financial assistance, as well as medical and preventive assistance, coronavirus detectors, sterilization and disinfection preparations.
- China has obtained medical aid and supplies, including disinfectants, sanitizers, medicines, gloves and medical masks from the UAE to support it in the direction of the coronavirus crisis.
- The Emirates Humanitarian City received a large number of nationals of Arab and foreign countries from China who were unable to return to their country after the suspension of flights to undergo medical care in the city throughout the quarantine period.
- The UAE has contributed to campaigns to sanitize and disinfect Al-Aqsa Mosque.
- The UAE has sent medical assistance containing sanitizers and disinfectants to Niger.

Conclusion:

Through all the foregoing, we can conclude that e-government is a phased development process of great importance in improving the quality of public services that governments are now obliged to achieve. The digital revolution has contributed significantly to a qualitative shift in the lives of nations and peoples.

In addition to what countries have seen since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, which has seen a widespread spread that has led to challenges for various activities and transactions in different sectors, all public and private sectors have not been spared. In this regard, states and governments that have

relied on digitization for their services have been able to mitigate the negative effects of this pandemic, in contrast to the fact that states and governments that have not provided adequate reliance on digital have encountered several obstacles to the continuity of their activities.

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the importance of digital transformation, not least because governments must be able to deliver public services despite restrictions on physical interaction and access to remote, marginalized, vulnerable and other underserved populations until one is overlooked.

According to this study, the UAE's experience in e-government is among the most successful in the world. This is confirmed by the reports of the United Nations and specialized organizations, which ranked the UAE experience among the first ranks globally This is what I have shown in the face of the coronavirus pandemic, where all institutions have joined forces.

The role of leadership in reassuring society and guiding its drive towards a safe exit from crisis with the least possible human and material toll, to pave the way for economic and social recovery, which is reflected in the quality of its public service. This is reflected in the contributions and basic objectives of this experience.

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