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Mohammed bin Rashid  
Al Maktoum Foundation



برنامج الأمم المتحدة الإنمائي  
United Nations Development Programme

# Arab Knowledge Report 2009

Towards Productive Intercommunication for Knowledge





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Towards Productive Intercommunication for Knowledge

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# Foreword by the Chairman of the Board, Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation

It gives me great pleasure to announce to you today the release of The Arab Knowledge Report 2009—Towards Productive Intercommunication for Knowledge, a fruit of the shared efforts of the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation and the United Nations Development Programme that lays the foundation of a strategic partnership that we hope will be both long lasting and of ongoing benefit for our Arab societies and their upcoming generations.

Given that analysis of the state of knowledge in the Arab homeland requires tireless effort and rigorous follow-up, this report can form no more than a first link in a continuing series of Arab Knowledge reports that will embody, from more than one perspective, the essential principles outlined by His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President, Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, in his book *My Vision*, principles to which His Highness gave voice when he wrote, "I do wish for all my Arab brothers and sisters what I wish for my people of the UAE. I just want them to reach the same advanced levels achieved by developed countries. Moreover, I would like them to take control over their issues and proceed with accomplishing their goals, ambitions and aspirations"

The issuing of the Arab Knowledge reports falls within the framework of the more prominent initiative of the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation—the largest development initiative of its kind in the region—which aims to establish and develop a comprehensive knowledge base through

the creation of a generation of future public and private sector leaders capable of seizing knowledge by the forelock and setting it to work on confronting the development challenges of their societies, while at the same time raising the standard of scholarly research and development, stimulating leadership in business, fostering innovation and creativity among youth, revitalizing the concept of productive culture, and strengthening ways of bringing different cultures closer together.

The Report now before us focuses on the organic relationship within the knowledge-society-development triad that is linked to modernisation, productive openness to both the inside and the outside, and all that contributes towards the strengthening of Arab human dignity. It views the current knowledge revolution as a point of entry capable of making development in the Arab homeland a reality. In the view of this report, knowledge, in both its enlightenment and developmental dimensions, is renaissance itself. It is also a road that requires a further sharpening of the tools of creative human intelligence in order to establish and reinforce the foundations of the knowledge economy in our region for the sake of the wellbeing and self-esteem of the Arab citizen.

The induction of knowledge concepts constitutes the cornerstone of any effective process of human development and as such makes a critical contribution to the escape from the vicious circles of poverty, unemployment, ignorance, and fear. It follows that the right to acquire, indigenise, and develop knowledge is beyond dispute.

This year's report may perhaps best be described as a thoroughgoing methodological and scholarly effort to study Arab knowledge in great detail, up to the point of its deployment in the service of the Arab individual. The aim is to furnish the Arab decision-maker, specialist, and citizen with a reference study that includes reliable indicators by which to measure the condition of knowledge in the Arab countries and thus assist with the development of plans and the assessment of performance and to kindle the spirit of competitiveness in a field in which this is of the essence.

The Report departs from the norm in formulating a daring proposed vision and work plan for the establishment of the knowledge society that embrace primary elements and required mechanisms likely to be of use in filling in the numerous gaps that dot the Arab knowledge landscape and in leading us through the portals of knowledge so that we may engage with its society and participate in its processes of production. The Report also opens for general discussion, critique, and review a proposed vision of work and action along three axes—the provision of enabling environments; the transfer, indigenisation and implantation of knowledge and then its deployment in the service of Arab human development.

The series of Arab Knowledge reports constitutes a cultural podium prepared by an elite of Arab specialists and intellectuals whose objective will be to ponder the state of Arab knowledge and suggest the methods most likely to succeed in

establishing the desired knowledge society. We may not all agree on what is to be found in this report. The goal, however, is to instigate constructive discussion that will lead to adoption and application of policies and programmes that will translate its insights from the realm of reporting to that of effective actions on behalf of Arab societies capable of bringing about their wellbeing and self-esteem.

This work of ours will neither be completed nor born fruit without the cooperation of all—governments, civil society, and specialists from different parts of the Arab homeland. From this perspective, I sincerely call on all involved, and indeed on all concerned parties, to peruse these reports and subject them to discussion, critique, and fruitful debate, with the express goal of creating the means of putting into practice, whether at an Arab regional or an individual country level, the ideas resulting from this interactive process.

It also gives me great pleasure, in this context, to express my thanks and appreciation to the United Nations Development Programme's Regional Bureau for Arab States and in particular the report team in Dubai, as well as to all those—thinkers, writers, editors, and technical personnel—who participated in bringing this report into being. I look forward to further fruitful collaboration to reinforce the foundations of the intellectual edifice of knowledge in this region and secure the mainstays of the human development to which the Arab world aspires.

**Sheikh Ahmed bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum  
Chairman of the Board  
Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation**

# Foreword by the Regional Director, UNDP Regional Bureau for Arab States

With the publication of this first report on knowledge in the Arab region, the United Nations Development Programme/Regional Bureau for Arab States and the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation inaugurate what may be considered one of the most ambitious and competent projects to build and reinforce the knowledge society in the Arab region and to implant there its epistemological, intellectual, and cultural principles, in all their dimensions. This report represents a first step in a strategic partnership, of which we are proud, between our development programme and that pioneering enlightenment foundation established at the initiative of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President, Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates and Ruler of Dubai, and for which generous resources have been allocated.

While this report extends and goes deeper into the issues presented by the Arab Human Development Report 2003, which addressed the subject of knowledge as one of the most important of the three challenges facing the Arab region in addition to protection of freedoms and women empowerment; the co-publication of this series of reports on Arab knowledge demonstrates the harmoniousness and accord of the efforts of the United Nations Development Programme and the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation, their shared dedication to a single goal, and the exalted nature of their mission and objective. All of these form a part of the range of regional and global effort in this field.

The diagnostic analysis contained in this first report on Arab knowledge shows that some progress has been made in the outward forms of knowledge in the Arab world. It has also made plain, however, the existence of numerous gaps that must be addressed, seriously and resolutely, if we wish to establish a society capable of producing knowledge. We endorse the Report's assumption that the ground lost by the Arabs in the knowledge field can be made up, provided, first, that the aspiration to do so is there, along with the political will, supported by the allocation of the resources needed to build the enabling environments and the institutions capable of nurturing progress in knowledge and the conversion of the gains achieved into means to realise comprehensive human development.

The Report presents a number of important analyses of the conditions of knowledge in the Arab region. We agree that these must be dealt with urgently. It expatiates on monitoring the situation of the most important pillars of the hoped-for knowledge society and dedicated special attention to knowledge capital, making clear in so doing the large discrepancy in capital acquired through education, not only among the Arab countries themselves but within each individual Arab state and between males and females, as well as between young people and adults. On the question of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), which constitutes a central pillar for the knowledge society, a set of proposals and initiatives have been formulated that will help to improve the current situation of

ICT in the Arab countries and reinforce its importance in the health, economic, social, and fields of knowledge in general. The report also emphasises that a revitalisation of the Arabic language is required to make it capable of mastering Arabic epistemological and digital content. The writers of the Report focus on the fact that the tasks designed to provide the optimal investment of ICT in the building of the Arab knowledge society lie beyond the means of individual Arab states and make plain the necessity of mastering and deploying modern technology through cooperation both within Arab countries and with their regional and global partners.

The Report also touches on the subject of the innovation that, in reinforcing all that helps humankind transcend obstacles and constraints, enriches both the emotions and the mind. It is made clear that the concept of innovation sanctioned in the Report goes beyond the significations of the term "inventiveness," which is linked fundamentally to the purely technical field and its tools, to embrace the Arab particularities of innovation in the arts, literature, and the human and social sciences. The Report presents a set of proposals on how to instigate innovation and tie it in to the various fields of production.

The select group of thinkers and scholars from all parts of the Arab region who have participated in the writing of this report justly acknowledge that their various proposals, which encapsulate a vision for the building of the knowledge society in the Arab homeland, favour the spirit and the options of human development. Special weight is given in the Report to defence of the principle of intercommunication both inside and outside the region, through partnership

and through productive and creative integration. This vision therefore suggests an achievable plan that includes markers along the route to an intercommunication that will lead to integration into spaces of knowledge that fly the flag of humanity and human intelligence, for the sake of partnership and creativity in the Arab societies.

The Arab Knowledge Report 2009–Towards Productive Intercommunication for Knowledge has laid the foundation for a practical treatment of this issue based on properly documented facts and a realistic view of the building of the knowledge society. We look forward to future reports that treat, through research and more profound study, the chief elements along the path to the building of the hoped-for knowledge society; from the firm grounding of enabling environments and the transfer and indigenisation of knowledge to its optimal deployment in the service of human development.

Space will allow me here to do no more than express my thanks and appreciation to all those who shared in the realisation of this report, including the writers, advisers, coordinators, and editing teams, as well as the work teams at both the United Nations Development Programme and the Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation. It also gives me special pleasure to express my gratitude to His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum for his help and support for this series of reports on knowledge in the Arab region, and to declare my hope that the collaboration between us in all matters that enrich and deepen the Arab knowledge and cultural base and strengthen the outlook for sustainable human development in the Arab homeland and the world as a whole will continue.

**Amat Al Alim Alsoswa**  
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# CONTENTS

<b>PREAMBLE</b>	1
<b>Introduction</b>	1
<b>Preliminaries to the Report</b>	2
<b>The dialectics of the Report</b>	2
<b>The topics of the Report</b>	3
The Theoretical Framework: concepts and problematics of the knowledge society (Chapter 1)	4
Arab Knowledge Performance Environments: expanding freedoms and building institutions (Chapter 2)	4
Education and the formation of knowledge capital (Chapter 3)	5
Information and Communications Technologies in the Arab Countries: the pillars and tools of knowledge (Chapter 4)	6
Arab research and innovation performance (Chapter 5)	6
Building the Knowledge Society in the Arab Nation: a vision and a plan (Chapter 6)	7
<b>The Arab nation and the world in 2009</b>	9
The state of human development in the Arab region	9
Concepts and indicators of Arab human development	9
The most important evolutions in Arab human development	9
Governance and the weakness of institutional performance	13
Variables exerting pressure on the Arab knowledge scene	13
War, occupation, internal conflict, and the disruption of knowledge	13
Extremism and its effect on the knowledge society	16
The stagnation of political reform and its effect on the enabling environment for knowledge	17
The world financial crisis: opportunities and challenges for the establishment of the knowledge society	18
<b>Overview of the current knowledge situation in the Arab region</b>	20
<hr/>	
<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	27
<b>THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CONCEPTS AND PROBLEMATICS OF THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	27
<b>Premises and principles: The knowledge-development-freedom triad</b>	27
<b>The conceptual building blocks</b>	28
From knowledge to knowledge society	28
The development of the concept of knowledge in Arab culture	28
The interaction and intersection of concepts	30
Poles of the knowledge society: the society-economy-technology triad	31
The networked society: the most conspicuous feature of the knowledge society	34
The knowledge society: towards expanding choices for renaissance and development	35
<b>The basic frame of reference for the knowledge society</b>	36
The positivist trend: the quantitative orientation	38
The political modernisation mindset: evoking human rights	39
<b>Problematic issues of the knowledge society</b>	41
The knowledge society and expanding political participation	42
The knowledge society and identity	44
The Arabic language and the challenges of information technology	46
The knowledge society and Arab women	48
Information technologies and virtual spaces	50

The knowledge society and the legitimacy of a new ethical code	52
<b>Conclusion</b>	54
<hr/>	
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	59
<b>ARAB KNOWLEDGE PERFORMANCE ENVIRONMENTS: EXPANDING FREEDOMS AND BUILDING INSTITUTIONS</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	59
<b>The state of knowledge environments in the Arab world: constraints and pressures</b>	60
Political environments: the paradox of political reform discourse and the decline in freedoms	61
Expanding political participation: the path to knowledge and creativity	61
Continued curbing of public freedoms	64
Freedom of opinion and expression: additional restrictions	64
Arab Media and government hegemony	65
Economic environments: towards responsible freedom and a balanced economy	67
Measuring economic freedoms	68
Toward expanding economic freedoms	68
The oil boom did not foster economic freedom as hoped	70
Media, cultural, and social environments	75
Poverty and social marginalisation	75
Trends towards religious radicalism and intolerance	76
Freedom of intellectual property	77
Global debate, Arab absence	78
Regulating intellectual property in the Arab world: disparity and occasional exaggeration	79
Challenges and opportunities for access to knowledge	81
Opportunities for creative Arab cooperation	81
Summary: Freedoms: A comprehensive cluster or disparate elements?	82
<b>From nurturing environments to supporting institutions</b>	83
Pioneering institutions and shining examples	84
Legislation as the way to support institutionalism	87
<b>On the need for an alternative index: a project in critique and transcendence</b>	89
<b>Peering into the future: Trajectories of the enabling environment</b>	90
<hr/>	
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	97
<b>EDUCATION AND THE FORMATION OF KNOWLEDGE CAPITAL</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	97
<b>The general state of knowledge as provided through education in the Arab countries</b>	98
<b>The need to draw an accurate picture of knowledge capital</b>	99
<b>Measuring a society's knowledge capital</b>	99
Knowledge capital formation by children	101
Quantitative indicators	101
Qualitative indicators	104
Time allocated to school subjects in basic education	104
Quality of knowledge acquired through basic education	105
Knowledge capital formation by youth	107
Quantitative dimensions	107
Qualitative Indicators	110
General secondary education and the formation of knowledge capital by youth	111
Technical secondary education and the formation of knowledge capital by youth	111
The role of higher education in the formation of knowledge capital	112

Quantitative indicators	112
Tertiary education and the formation of the specialised knowledge capital needed to meet development needs	114
Distribution of undergraduate and graduate students by discipline	114
Qualifications of graduates	116
Knowledge capital acquired by adults through education	118
Knowledge capital required for participation in the knowledge society	121
Quantitative dimensions	121
Qualitative dimensions	123
Investing in the formation of human knowledge capital through education	123
Spending on education	124
National income and the formation of quantitative knowledge capital	124
National income and qualitative capital formation	126
<b>Educational reform efforts</b>	126
<b>Conclusion</b>	131
<hr/>	
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	143
<b>INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES IN THE ARAB COUNTRIES: THE PILLARS AND TOOLS OF KNOWLEDGE</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	143
<b>ICT in the Arab countries</b>	144
The spread of computers and the internet	144
The Arabic language and the internet	149
<b>Anticipated advances in ICT</b>	151
<b>Technology applications and Arabic digital content</b>	153
Regulatory frameworks	153
The ICT sector in the Arab countries	154
Hardware production or assembly	154
The software industry	155
ICT applications and building the knowledge society	156
E-government services	156
ICT and education	159
E-commerce	162
Technology applications for healthcare	163
Technology and social development	163
Arabic digital content production	165
Arabic language internet content and problematics	167
<b>Technological advance and future initiatives</b>	171
<b>Conclusion</b>	173
<hr/>	
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	181
<b>ARAB PERFORMANCE IN RESEARCH AND INNOVATION</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	181
<b>Innovation and the knowledge economy</b>	181
The correlation between Gross Domestic Product and innovation in the Arab region	183
Demographics and the challenge of inclusion of youth	183
<b>Science and technology policies</b>	184
Arab initiatives and strategies	185
The production and dissemination of scientific knowledge	185

Partnership with the private sector	186
The reality of Arab research centres	186
The capacity of research centres for innovation	189
The performance of Arab researchers	190
Science research funding in the Arab world	192
The outputs of Arab scientific research	196
Global engagement	199
<b>Social science policies and artistic innovation</b>	201
Social science research	202
The Arabic language and innovation	203
Literary and artistic innovation	204
<b>The innovation gap and its indicators in the current state of Arab knowledge</b>	206
The innovation gap	206
Flight of human capital	207
The social and economic impact of innovation	209
The dissemination of knowledge and innovation	211
<b>Boosting Arab research and innovation performance</b>	212
<hr/>	
<b>CHAPTER 6</b>	219
<b>BUILDING THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY IN THE ARAB WORLD: A VISION AND A PLAN</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	219
<b>The Arab knowledge gap: deficits and holes</b>	219
<b>The knowledge gap can be overcome</b>	223
<b>A proposed vision for building the knowledge society</b>	225
Principles and foundations for movement towards the construction of the knowledge society in the Arab world	225
Broadening the scope of freedom	225
Positive interaction with the growing needs of society	226
Openness and intercommunication	227
Proposed axes of action for the creation of the knowledge society	227
The first axis: the creation of enabling environments	228
The second axis: the transfer and indigenisation of knowledge	228
The third axis: deployment of knowledge	229
Axes and bases: intersection and interaction	229
Aspects of action towards building the components of the knowledge society	230
Action in the area of the enabling environment	230
Action in the field of transfer and indigenisation of the knowledge society	232
Action to deploy knowledge	235
<b>Towards a new mechanism to measure Arab knowledge</b>	237
The Arab knowledge index	237
<b>Conclusion</b>	238
<hr/>	
<b>REFERENCES</b>	241
<hr/>	
<b>ANNEX 1. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS (AUTHOR NAME; PAPER TITLE)</b>	251
<b>ANNEX 2. PROJECT FOR A DATABASE ON KNOWLEDGE IN THE ARAB REGION</b>	253
<b>ANNEX 3. MEASUREMENT OF THE ARAB COUNTRIES' KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY (BASED ON THE METHODOLOGY OF THE WORLD BANK)</b>	257

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## LIST OF BOXES

Box 1	The Effect of the Financial Crisis on Development Funding	19
Box 1-1	The Concept of Knowledge	28
Box 1-2	“Knowledge” in al-Tahanawi’s “The Terminology of the Arts”	29
Box 1-3	A Linguistic Perspective on “Knowledge”	30
Box 1-4	The Power of Knowledge	34
Box 1-5	Building the Information Society: a global challenge in the new millennium	40
Box 1-6	Knowledge in an Age of Globalisation	44
Box 1-7	Cultural and Linguistic Diversity and Local Cultural Identities	45
Box 1-8	Women’s Freedom is a Key to Many Doors	48
Box 1-9	The Virtual as Interrogation of the Actual	50
Box 1-10	The Genome, a New Triumph for Knowledge	53
Box 2-1	The Contradictory Nature of Economic Freedom Indicators	72
Box 2-2	Towards Productive Intercommunication for Knowledge: Translation in the Age of al-Ma’mun	85
Box 2-3	The Legal Framework for the European Union	88
Box 3-1	The Aims of Education for All	101
Box 3-2	Oman’s New Plan for Education	106
Box 3-3	The Growing Numbers of Universities in the Arab Region	108
Box 3-4	The knowledge students should acquire: the contemporary French approach	112
Box 3-5	Expansion in General and Technical Secondary Education in Bahrain and its Impact on Female Enrolment	113
Box 3-6	More PhDs Needed as University Teachers	114
Box 3-7	The Educational Level of Saudi Arabians	118
Box 3-8	The Contribution of Non-Public Schools to Education in the Arab Region	127
Box 3-9	Human Capital Formation to Meet the Needs of Instruction and Pedagogy	128
Box 3-10	The Lebanese Association for Educational Studies: a model for national and pan-Arab networking for the development of educational knowledge	130
Box 4-1	Open Source Software and Educational Content	160
Box 4-2	Evaluating the Performance of Projects to Network Educational Institutions	161
Box 4-3	ICT and Local Development: Examples from Arab countries	164
Box 4-4	ICT Incubators and Arabic Digital Content	165
Box 4-5	Arabic Language Processing Systems: machine translation, grammar checking, and searching	168
Box 4-6	Digital Content in Entertainment and the Media	169
Box 4-7	Preserving Tradition through Digitalisation	170
Box 5-1	Official Arab Initiatives for Invigorating Research and Development	184
Box 5-2	A Policy for Science, Technology, and Innovation in Lebanon	185
Box 5-3	Expenditure on Research and Development	187
Box 5-4	Pioneering Arab Innovators in Genetic Science	191
Box 5-5	The Ten Commandments for Researchers in Low-income States	191
Box 5-6	Jordan’s “A Professor in Every Factory”	194
Box 5-7	The European Growth Strategy	195
Box 5-8	ICARDA	196
Box 5-9	Arab Innovators in Architecture and Music	205
Box 5-10	Knowledge Transfer via Migrant Scientists	208
Box 5-11	Corporate Funding of Research and Development	209
Box 6-1	Rationalist Critique and Historical Vision	224
Box 6-2	The Legitimacy of Ambition	227
Box 6-3	The Indigenisation of Science	234
Box 6-4	Scientific Progress and Social Progress	236

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## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1	Decline in human poverty rates by country (per cent): 1996-2007	11
Figure 2	Unemployment rate among Arab youth (A) and their share in total unemployment (B) (per cent) in 2005/2006	12
Figure 1-1	The poles of the knowledge society	33
Figure 2-1	Press freedom in the Arab countries, 2008	62
Figure 2-2	Perceptions of corruption in the Arab World 2008	62
Figure 2-3	Perceptions of corruption 2003-2008	63
Figure 2-4	Distribution of Economic Freedom in Arab Countries, 2009	69
Figure 2-5	Average economic freedom index for seventeen Arab countries	69
Figure 2-6	Heritage economic freedom index for 2009, Arab countries-comparison countries	71
Figure 2-7	Fraser Institute index of economic freedom of Arab countries vs. comparison countries	72
Figure 2-8	Index of global competitiveness for Arab countries	73
Figure 2-9	Average growth of per capita GDP	74
Figure 2-10	Net exports of manufactured goods in Arab countries	75
Figure 3-1	Education and human resources index for Arab Countries (most recent statistical period compared to 1995)	99
Figure 3-2	Basic knowledge capital formation opportunities for children in Arab countries against per capita GDP	104
Figure 3-3	Advanced knowledge capital formation opportunities for Arab youth against per capita GDP	110
Figure 3-4	Adult knowledge capital acquired through education in Arab countries against per capita GDP	120
Figure 3-5	Actual (or expected) knowledge capital formed through education among different age groups in Arab countries against per capita GDP	122
Figure 3-6a	Maths performance of eighth-year students in Arab countries against per capita GDP	125
Figure 3-6b	Math performance of eighth-year students in Arab countries against per capita GDP (excluding Dubai)	125
Figure 3-7	Science performance of eighth-year students in Arab countries against per capita GDP (excluding Dubai)	126
Figure 4-1	ICT index values for Arab countries and selected groups of non-Arab countries (1995, most recent statistics with + and – change values)	145
Figure 4-2	Number of computers per 1,000 inhabitants, Arab region, and selected groups of non-Arab countries	145
Figure 4-3	Internet users – Arab world, world, and selected non-Arab country groups by per capita GDP	146
Figure 4-4	Bandwidth of global internet access for the Arab World and selected non-Arab country groups	147
Figure 4-5	Price basket for internet (in US dollars per month) in some Arab countries, worldwide, and in selected non-Arab groups of countries by income	148
Figure 4-6	Language access to internet and ratio of speakers to total internet users	148
Figure 4-7	Growth of languages on the internet 2000-2008	150
Figure 4-8	Availability of e-government services (2006 values)	158
Figure 4-9	Change in business internet use plotted against per capita income in some Arab countries and worldwide	162
Figure 4-10	Paper consumption worldwide and in some Arab countries by per capita GDP	166
Figure 4-11	Paper consumption and internet use worldwide and in some Arab countries, 2004-2005	167
Figure 5-1	Innovation system index for the most recent period in comparison to 1995	182
Figure 5-2	Innovation and development	182
Figure 5-3	Per capita GDP and the innovation system index	183
Figure 5-4	Arab-international cooperation in scientific dissemination, 2004	187
Figure 5-5	Arab participation in the European Union's Sixth Framework Programme (2002-2006)	195
Figure 5-6	Number of scientific papers published in the Arab region	197

Figure 5-7	Published scientific articles according to specialisation (1998-2007), based on Table5-7	198
Figure 5-8	Scientific impact of Arab publications	199
Figure 5-9	Percentage of Arabic language-use in research papers published in the Maghreb, 1980-2007	203
Figure 5-10	Languages used in human and social science research publications in the Maghreb, 2007	203
Figure 6-1	Mechanism for movement towards the Arab knowledge society	226
Figure 6-2	Priorities for action to build the elements of the knowledge society in the Arab world	231
Figure 6-3	Priorities for action to build the elements of the knowledge society in the Arab world	233
Figure 6-4	Priorities for action to build the elements of the knowledge society in the Arab world	235
Figure A-1	The Knowledge Economy Index for the Arab countries	259
Figure A-2	Normalised values for indicators concerning knowledge for the Arab countries, the G7, and the world	261
Figure A-3	Index values for the pillars of the knowledge economy for the Arab countries, the G7, and the world	262
Figure A-4	The latest KEI compared to 1995	262

---

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1	Human development indicators for the Arab countries (2001 versus 2006)	9
Table 2	Population and GDP per capita in Arab countries (2008, projections)	10
Table 3	Incidence of extreme poverty in a sample of Arab countries	11
Table 4	The employment challenge: projected numbers of new jobs required	13
Table 2-1	Arab Countries that realised positive reforms in the field of business, 2007-2008	70
Table 2-2	Arab Countries according to their ties to trade agreements and intellectual property	79
Table 2-3	Rights and responsibilities of Arab members in the World Trade Organisation in the field of copyright and access to knowledge	80
Table 3-1	Opportunities for basic knowledge capital formation in children through education in 2005 (per cent)	103
Table 3-2	Opportunities for the formation of knowledge capital by youth (ages 15-24) in Arab countries, 2005 (per cent)	109
Table 3-3	Comparison of overall results of students in Arab countries and students in USA on the business administration test	117
Table 3-4	Comparison of overall results of students in Arab countries and students in USA on the computer science test	117
Table 3-5	Estimated knowledge capital acquired through education among adults (25 to 50 years) in Arab countries in 2008 (per cent)	119
Table 3-6	Summary of estimated quantitative capital obtained through education for the different age strata of Arab societies in 2005 (per cent)	121
Table 4-1	Top ten languages used on the net (number of internet users by language)	149
Table 4-2	Readiness of Arab countries to adopt e-government applications	157
Table 4-3	Readiness to adopt e-government applications in some comparable countries	157
Table 5-1	The quality of Arab research institutions	189
Table 5-2	Ranking of Arab countries in the Assimilation of Technology index (out of 134 countries)	189
Table 5-3	The number of researchers in the Arab region	190
Table 5-4	Expenditure on research in the Arab region	193
Table 5-5	Expenditure on research and development and percentage contributions from private and public sectors in comparison countries	193
Table 5-6	Number of scientific publications in selected Arab Countries	197
Table 5-7	Number of scientific articles published in the Arab world, 1998-2007	198
Table 5-8	Arab-international cooperation in scientific publishing	199
Table 5-9	Patents registration with the USPTO by seven Arab countries	201
Table 5-10	Sizes of cinema audiences and numbers of cinema screens, 2004-2005	205
Table 5-11	Human capital flight index	209

Table 5-12	Trade in technological products	210
Table A-1	Indicators of the knowledge economy index for the Arab countries	257
Table A-2	Knowledge Economy Index for the Arab countries compared to other countries	258
Table A-3	Economic performance and KEI indicators for the Arab countries compared with the world's geographic regions	260
Table A-4	Availability of knowledge indicators for the Arab countries included by the World Bank	264

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<b>STATISTICAL ANNEX</b>	271
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**LIST OF FIGURES**

Figure b-1	Growth in average total number of telephone lines (fixed and mobile) per thousand people plotted against per capita income for the world's states, some Arab states, and selected groups of states	306
Figure b-2	Growth in average number of fixed telephone lines per thousand people plotted against per capita income for the world's states, some Arab states, and selected groups of states	307
Figure b-3	Growth in average number of mobile phone lines per thousand of population plotted against per capita income for the world's states, some Arab states, and selected groups of states	307

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**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1	Total population, population growth, and proportion of children in the Arab region	271
Table 2	Human Development Indices	272
Table 3	Economic Indicators	273
Table 4	World Bank Knowledge Economy Index (most recent compared to 1995)	274
Table 5	Relationship of Arab market competitiveness with knowledge production 2008	275
Table 6	Worldwide governance indicators in the Arab region and comparison countries 2007	276
Table 7	Press Freedom Index in the Arab region 2008	277
Table 8	World Bank Economic Incentive and Institutional Regime Index (most recent compared to 1995)	278
Table 9	Adult literacy rates by gender in the Arab states 1980 and 2005	279
Table 10	Gross enrolment ratio in secondary education in the Arab states by gender, 1980 and 2006	280
Table 11	Gross enrolment ratios in tertiary education in the Arab states by gender, 1980 and 2005	281
Table 12	World Bank Education and Human Resources Index (KAM) (most recent compared to 1995)	282
Table 13	Adult illiterate population and children (of primary school age) out of school in the Arab countries by gender 2007 (or closest two years)	283
Table 14	Regional literacy rates and gross enrolment in primary and the upper stage of basic education 2007 (or the closest two years) in the Arab region and the other regions of the world	284
Table 15	Ratios of gross enrolment in upper secondary and tertiary education and average school life expectancy in the Arab countries and the other regions of the world 2006 (or the closest two years)	284
Table 16	Net and gross enrolment in primary education and proportion of over-age pupils for this stage 2006	285
Table 17	Gross enrolment ratios in upper stage of basic education by gender, average school life expectancy, and number of years of compulsory education around the year 2005	286
Table 18	Lessons in basic education devoted to each subject as a proportion of all lessons (per cent)	287
Table 19	Time devoted to education in the two stages of basic education in the Arab states	288
Table 20	Literacy rates among young people (15-24 years of age) and gross enrolment in upper secondary education by gender 2005	289



Table 21	Time devoted to secondary education in the Arab states	290
Table 22	Evolution of enrolment rates in vocational and technical secondary education in the Arab states from 1970 till 2005 (per cent)	291
Table 23	Enrolment in tertiary education by level of study around 2005 (per cent)	292
Table 24	Student enrolment rates in tertiary education by field of specialisation 2005 (per cent)	293
Table 25	Number of specialists in the health fields in the Arab states 2005 (per thousand people)	294
Table 26	Distribution of graduates of tertiary education by field of specialisation around 2005	295
Table 27	School life expectancy in the Arab states from 1970 to 1990 (in years)	296
Table 28	Estimated educational level of people aged 25-50 in the Arab states 2005	297
Table 29	Government expenditure on education in the Arab countries in the five years 2002-2006	298
Table 30	Enrolment rates in non-government schools at pre-university educational stages in the Arab countries 2005 (per cent)	299
Table 31	Number of students from some Arab countries in the US before and after the events of September 2001	300
Table 32	Number of patents granted in the US in 2007 and spending on research and development	301
Table 33	World Bank Innovation System Index (most recent compared to 1995)	302
Table 34	Indicators on research and development activity and innovation in the Arab countries and other country groups	303
Table 35	World Bank indicators for the Innovation System Index	304
Table a-1	World Bank ICT Index (most recent compared with 1995)	305
Table c-1	Classification of the Arab countries according to some indicators of ICT infrastructure.	309
Table c-2	Classification of the Arab countries according to internet use, access cost, and bandwidth	310
Table c-3	Ranking of some Arab countries according to networked readiness index (2008/2009)	310
Table c-4	Ranking of a group of Arab countries according to some criteria related to ICT policy for 2008/2009	311
Table c-5	The Global Competitiveness Index and rank for some Arab states with respect to selected pillars, 2008/2009	311