ICT skills and technology-based classrooms to close gap between school and college education

ICDL calls for increased integration of technology in education to transform classrooms into the 21st Century

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ICDL GCC Foundation, the governing body and certification authority of the International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL) programme in the Gulf region and Iraq, has announced that it is extending further support to the educational sector as a catalyst for change in education. Following the successful introduction of ICDL in 2001 by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) with the aim to enhance capability in Arab States through the promotion of computer literacy, the ICDL certification programme has become the de facto standard for ICT education, endorsed across the region by education ministries and academic institutions for the benefit of teachers and students.

Owing to its globally recognized standard and vendor independence, a broad range of schools and universities throughout the Middle East are increasingly aligning their ICT curriculum and assessment programmes with the ICDL syllabus. Since the launch of the UNESCO's ICDL initiative, countries like Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, UAE, Egypt and Jordan have taken major steps in reforming their educational systems to include a mandate requiring ICDL certification from all teachers working in the public and private education.

Parallel to this transformation, studies and experiences from around the world in developing and industrialized countries show that high school students should not only be exposed to advanced levels in math and English, but equally important they should acquire ICT skill and learn in technology-based classrooms. This type of exposure to technology and its use for educational purposes reinforces essential skills such as resourcefulness, independent-learning, problem-solving capacity, critical thinking, and other higher-order skills. Reports from the region still show that many high-school graduates enter universities unprepared due to lack of ICT competence. Colleges and universities are now demanding that new incoming students submit to

a test in ICT before admission or enrol in a pre-college foundational programme that builds computer competency.

To close the gap between school education and college expectations and reduce the rate of dropouts, the burden lies on the school educational system to ensure that their graduating students are primed for college education and are comfortable using technology within their academic programme regardless of their selected major. ICDL GCC Foundation works closely with government organizations to sustain the spread of IT awareness in education. Many universities and colleges around the world and across the region reward students that have successfully achieved ICDL certification with up to four college credits or dispensation from certain entry requirements.

"We are extremely proud to be part of the educational transformation occurring in our region" said Jamil Ezzo, Director General – ICDL GCC Foundation. "We reiterate our commitment to continue supporting the local governments, universities and schools with innovative ideas that help students and teachers adapt to the modern education of the 21st Century. An example of our efforts is the annual ICDL Computer Summer Camps that have already empowered tens of thousands of educators and students with ICT skills funded by the generosity of corporate citizens. Another support programme that has helped thousands of college students in several GCC states is the establishment of IFDP (ICDL Fund for Development Programme) which works similarly to educational grants and scholarship programmes by offering university and college students subsidized ICDL certification,".

About ICDL in education

The ICDL programme is made available in Arabic and 40 other languages and offered in 148 countries including all the GCC Member States and Iraq. It is recognized by over 22,000 universities around the world of which 45 educational institutions across the GCC region and is highly recommended by the Arab Bureau of Education for the Gulf States. ICDL is managed and operated by over 60 international NGO's and not-for-profit organizations including UNESCO and over 50 computer societies around the world.

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