

## H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum IT Education Project signs MOU with ICDL GCC Foundation

Move aimed at enhancing computer literacy in education field, using ICDL's benchmark standards

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H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum IT Education Project (ITEP) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL) GCC Foundation to enhance computer literacy in the UAE, using the ICDL syllabus and international standards, initially focusing on the education sector.

The MOU was signed recently by Dr. Abdulla Al Karam, Director of ITEP, and Mr. Jamil Ezzo, Director General, ICDL GCC Foundation. Both parties agreed to work jointly to "raise the levels of computer skills in society and industry and provide access to all to the digital Society."

The key objectives outlined in the MOU include the adoption of the ICDL syllabus and international standards in the computer training of teachers, organizing summer boot-camps to raise computer proficiency of school students, assisting in the implementation of the ICDL program in the teaching of basic computer skills to the visually impaired and exploring collaborative services using the ICDL standards and range of syllabi.

ITEP has been playing an important role in enhancing teachers' abilities to use computers as a teaching tool and to complement the Ministry of Education's efforts to upgrade computer education so that students are equipped to meet the challenges of modern workplace," said Dr. Abdulla Al Karam, Director of ITEP. "With the signing of the MOU with ICDL GCC Foundation, we will be able to accelerate the process we began with earlier, because ICDL has proven models with benchmarks that are recognized internationally by academic institutions, government organizations, and private organizations."

"Just as we provided IT education for students in the past, ITEP is looking to expand so that we can bring our programmes to other members of our society including parents, teachers and people with special needs," said Dr. Al Karam. "We will work in partnership with the ICDL GCC Foundation and continue to design different programmes that meet these individual requirements."

"As two strong organizations dedicated to furthering computer literacy, working towards critical skills enhancement of various sections of society, ITEP and ICDL GCC Foundation have a common goal - improve the quality of the lives of people by bridging the digital gap. The ICDL GCC Foundation was created to manage the ICDL program in the GCC states, and has since been working relentlessly to spread IT literacy and competency by working directly with government organizations and

policymakers,” said Ezzo. “As teachers play a pivotal role in imparting IT skills to students, the education sector has remained our focus area. We are therefore delighted to join hands with the H.H. Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum IT Education Project and thus consolidate our position in the education sector in the region.”

“ICDL GCC Foundation gives the highest priority to training standards. This tie-up with ITEP will allow us to accredit additional ICDL training centers within the public schools” said Ezzo. “We have recently accredited 16 public schools in which ITEP will run its ICDL training to over 2,000 teachers in the coming months. This will ensure that the benefits of IT competency cover not just teachers, but also students as well as parents.”

Over the past four years, ITEP has been actively involved in creating programs that incorporate IT learning into the education sector. It has successfully trained 60,750 people, including 52,000 students, averaging 13,000 students per year. In an effort to take the programmes beyond the school curriculum, ITEP also conducts several boot camps, averaging 1000 students every summer.

Following the success of the higher secondary programmes, ITEP extended its focus to higher education students, starting with the Dubai Islamic College. About 1,900 students of the College were provided IT education during the academic year 2003-2004. ITEP further broadened the coverage of its programmes to cover government organisations. ITEP has currently provided IT training to 3320 personnel of the Dubai Police Department. IT courses provided by ITEP also formed part of the curriculum designed for 600 officers and cadets of the Dubai Police Academy. The latest organization to be covered by ITEP programmes is Dubai Naturalisation and Residency Department, where 50 employees were provided IT training in July of this year.

ICDL GCC Foundation is the governing body of ICDL program in the Gulf States and the regional arm of European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL), the not-for-profit global governing body of the ICDL member countries dedicated to helping raise the basic computer competency in societies and providing access for all to the information society. The ICDL program has achieved remarkable success in the Middle East since its introduction to the region in 2001 by UNESCO Cairo Office. Currently most of the education ministries and academic institutions in the region are adopting the ICDL training to enhance IT skills of their employees and students.