

ICDL calls for government participation in IT literacy campaigns to reduce unemployment among GCC nationals

The private sector is the answer to the unemployment problem in the GCC

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ICDL GCC Foundation, the governing body of the International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL) programme in the Gulf States, has called for increased investment in IT literacy programmes across the GCC states, to help enhance the employment prospects of Nationals in the private sector.

Despite the fact that intra-regional economic growth is being witnessed by all Gulf States, unemployment among GCC nationals remains to be a serious problem. The job market situation in the GCC region as a whole is characterised by the fact that the majority of jobs in the private sector are taken by expatriates who make up 30 per cent of the region's population. According to the Gulf Economic Report, 7.5 million expatriates are currently employed in the GCC.

The low percentage of UAE Nationals employed in the private sector, especially where good working conditions and strong career prospects exist, is an alarming concern for governments. According to the National Human Resource Development and Employment Authority's (Tanmia) HR Report 2005, the proportion of UAE Nationals in the private sector has remained constant at 1995 levels of less than two per cent.

"The role played by governments in job creation has become somewhat limited. There are not enough government jobs created to accommodate the increasing national workforce. Job creation in the private sector is the solution to the unemployment problem facing the region. Obviously GCC nationals are not being absorbed by the private sector because their skills do not match the needs of private sector employers", said Jamil Ezzo, Director General, ICDL GCC Foundation.

"While each GCC State is committed to providing jobs to their citizens, the market scenario favours the expatriate labour force due to a variety of factors, including wage expectations and higher qualifications," said Ezzo. "As the Information Age will create more demand for people with IT skills, the focus of all campaigns for nationalisation of jobs should be on IT literacy."

"In order to achieve effective implementation of a job localization policy within the private sector, a proactive approach in skills development is crucial. The lack of compatible skills with the rapidly changing demands of the private sector could provide a serious setback to the nationalisation of jobs in the region, in view of the strong domination of the job market by expatriates," added Ezzo.

"It is vital for Governments to tailor their job nationalisation programmes to meet the requirements of the modern labour market," said Ezzo. "As computer literacy rates are relatively low in the GCC when compared to the developed countries, it is most important to integrate computer skills in the education system, as well as provide greater opportunities for acquiring higher IT skills during and after the college and university education."

Technology has affected nearly every type of work. Workers across a broad range of occupations in today's job market require high-level of generic knowledge and technical skills, as well as the ability to adapt to new technology implementations. Moreover, both academicians and policy makers need to work hand-in-hand on human resource development and educational planning. For educational planning to be instrumental in the achievement of economic goals, it must be geared to meet the demand for required skills in specific industrialization programmes.

"Several GCC Member States have implemented or are in the process of implementing the ICDL IT literacy programme and made mandatory for government employees, teachers and students. ICDL GCC Foundation has been actively involved regionally in taking basic IT skills to the doorstep of different segments of society in order to improve career opportunities."

"The GCC states' economies are diversifying rapidly beyond the traditional oil resource. The national workforce must be equipped with the right mix of skills to support the dynamics of the job market. The region has a historic opportunity to take advantage of the current economic boom to invest in a skilled workforce that matches the demand of the private sector. Growing evidence shows direct links between economic growth and investment in

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human capital”, Ezzo concluded.

About ICDL

International Computer Driving License (ICDL), is an internationally recognized computer proficiency standard that is owned by the European Computer Driving License (ECDL) and introduced by the UNESCO's Cairo Office (UCO) for Arab states in 2001. ICDL is gaining increasing acceptance in the Middle East, with several governments adopting as a requirement to their employees. The ICDL program exists in over 132 countries, and is offered in 32 languages, including Arabic. The programs offered are all based on one standard syllabus and question set. There are more than 15,000 centres worldwide, and over 10 million exams have been taken globally since the launch of the program.

About ICDL GCC Foundation

ICDL GCC Foundation was created by the ECDL Foundation, the not-for-profit global governing body of the ECDL and ICDL member countries dedicated to helping raise the general level of computer skills in societies and providing access for all to the information society, to serve the to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) States with their implementation of ICDL and for providing them with localised support to ensure quality of ICDL programs. The ICDL-GCC Foundation is the sole ICDL licensee and accreditation body that is responsible to support ICDL accredited training and testing centres in the GCC. It also acts as the reviewing and approving body for the local adaptation of ICDL programs, including authorizing the sale of Arabic ICDL content and testing material in the region.

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