



## **World Bank Report indicates GCC countries invest up to 5 per cent of GDP on education, but achieve only modest returns**

*ICDL calls for education ministries to adopt more international standards and integrate ICT into education*

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Education is a strategic priority for leaders in the GCC countries, with significant investments being made to reform educational system as the region moves ahead with its transition into a knowledge-based economy. A recent World Bank report reveals that despite the region's heavy investment in education, the returns were modest. The GCC countries have spent an average of five per cent of their GDPs on education, spearheaded by the UAE Federal Government, which allocated about 25 per cent of its federal budget for education.

The report also indicates that the GCC countries have initially focused on establishing mass education systems, building schools, recruiting teachers, training instructors and upgrading their curriculum. Expenditure on Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in education has also been recently increased, which has made it the fastest growing of all categories of educational spending.

Progress has been realized with the deployment of ICT in several areas of education systems. ICT was introduced in the management of education systems to improve the quality of administrative activities and processes, including human resource management, student registration, monitoring of student enrollment and achievement, and planning. ICT was also introduced as a new academic subject, and was also integrated with school curricula to mould with traditional education, such as instruction in the classroom through the use of software or resources on the Internet. That said, UNESCO warns that the region is likely to face a challenge in recruiting the number of

qualified teachers needed to meet the demand by 2015. The challenge is more pertinent for countries such as Saudi Arabia and Iraq.

### Primary Teacher Stocks, Flows, and Additional Teachers Needed to Reach UPE by 2015

(in 000)

Country	Primary teacher stocks			Primary teacher flows, 2004–15	
				Teachers to fill vacancies due to attrition (6.5%)	Total number of teachers needed for UPE and attrition
	2004	2015	Difference		
Jordan	39**#	44	4.9	29.9	34.8
Kuwait	12	17	4.4	10.2	14.6
Tunisia	59#	47	-12	27.1	27.1
Lebanon	32	29	-3.4	18.3	18.3
Egypt, Arab Rep. of	355**#	424	68.9	277.6	346.5
West Bank and Gaza	14	20	5.8	12.1	17.9
Algeria	170	157	-13	104.2	104.2
Syrian Arab Rep.	125**	125	-0.1	88.9	88.9
Saudi Arabia	204	341	137	186.6	323.6
Iraq	211	265	53.4	167.6	221.1
Morocco	148	158	10.4	109.0	119.3

Source: UNESCO Institute for statistics.

Note: The projected teacher stock for 2015 is based upon the estimated primary school-age population in 2015 plus 10% or half the current rate of repetition all together divided by a pupil-teacher ratio (PTR) of 40:1 (or the current PTR if it is below the benchmark).

# Data refer to 2003.

\*\*UIS estimates.

Jamil Ezzo, Director General, ICDL GCC Foundation commented, “The introduction of ICT in education must go hand-in-hand with a change of culture within the body of our educational establishments beginning with our educators. To combat the current and foreseen challenges of our fast-changing world, upgrading the skills of our teachers must take priority in our region. Teachers must also be equipped with the necessary training and support to effectively acquire computer skills and adopt them to the teaching and learning processes as well as their administrative duties.”

The World Bank report also notes that the MENA region spends more on average in terms of public expenditure per student at all levels of education compared to other regions. Despite the aggressive spending on education, the report still shows that the GCC's education system has yet to achieve its full capacity to produce graduates with the skills and expertise necessary to compete with other regions.

"To expedite the transition to a knowledge-based society, the adaptation of best practices and integration of more practical training programs in academic subjects that

are based on well-established international qualifications, assessment systems, and quality assurance mechanisms, including certification and accreditation, has become a crucial component to match the ever-changing and complex demands of the job market. Although we are impressed with the region's progress in the implementation of a computer literacy standard for employees of education ministries, we are keen to work with education ministries across the GCC to incorporate the ICDL standard into the curriculum; examples of which include Oman" added Ezzo.

ICDL is a vendor-neutral, non-commercial certification designed to equip candidates with basic ICT skills and boost their confidence to use a computer. It is an initiative funded by the European Union Commission to promote digital literacy in the workplace, in education and in society based on a unified standard. There are over 1,800 schools, universities, governments and private centres that are currently approved across the GCC to provide ICT training and testing based on the ICDL international standard.

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### **About ICDL**

International Computer Driving License (ICDL), is an internationally recognised computer proficiency standard that is owned by the European Computer Driving License Foundation (ECDL) and introduced by the UNESCO's Cairo Office (UCO) for Arab states in 2001, is gaining increasing acceptance in the Middle East, with several governments adopting and prescribing it to their employees. The ICDL program exists in over 140 countries, and is offered in 36 languages, including Arabic. The programs offered are all based on one standard syllabus and question set. There are more than 26,000 centres worldwide, above 5 million candidates, more than 1 million issued certificates and over 20 million exams have been taken globally since the launch of the program year 1997.

### **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 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.