DAWN OF A NEW ERA  
- History is Made as  
H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum Launches Federal iPad Initiative Today
Today marks the start of a very exciting, challenging and empowering period for the Higher Colleges of Technology and our federal counterparts, Zayed University and UAEU. We will witness history in the making as the Higher Education iPad Initiative is officially launched by H.H. Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, UAE Vice President & Prime Minister, and Ruler of Dubai and H.E. Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan Minister for Higher Education and Scientific Research. This initiative is one of the most exciting, innovative and transformative processes to be introduced throughout our nation’s higher education system and in the world.

It is very pleasing to see how enthusiastically our academic leaders and faculty members have collectively embraced this new strategy and the associated training – devising many innovative ways in which to leverage this new mobile technology in their classrooms. I am also heartened to see that from the Higher Colleges of Technology’s perspective the launch of this initiative coincides with the start of our 25th year of operation – a very significant milestone in our history.

This whole process, which started in early 2012, demonstrates the Higher Colleges of Technology’s ongoing commitment to excellence in education that includes a strong focus on successful student learning outcomes in technology and innovation - achieved through the implementation of cutting-edge mobile learning technologies. We are pleased to be working collaboratively with the other two federal institutions to create ways of enhancing learning through the use of transformative technologies.

With this emphasis on innovation in education we are motivating and engaging our students, ensuring they will have the necessary skills of adaptability, information technology and analytical thinking, thus enabling them to make important contributions to the United Arab Emirates and to succeed in a changing world.

I warmly thank and congratulate all those members of the HCT community who have contributed to the success of this mobile learning initiative and wish you all the best in your endeavours over the coming year and as we prepare for the 1st Global Mobile Learning Congress to be held in Dubai with many distinguished guests on September 25.

Dr. Tayeb Kamali
Vice Chancellor, Higher Colleges of Technology
Chair, Federal iPad Initiative
History-making iPad Initiative revolutionizes UAE Higher Education

In order to achieve this goal a transformation - a “technological revolution” - would be necessary in the classrooms, laboratories and lecture theatres. Hence, in April 2012 H.E. Sheikh Nahayan Mabarak Al Nahayan, Minister of Higher Education and Scientific Research, gave the UAE’s three federal higher education institutions - UAE University, Zayed University and the Higher Colleges of Technology - an innovative challenge and a vision to integrate the concept of mobile learning into the daily lives of those institutions’ students and faculty.

Accordingly, the three institutions were mandated to embark on this watershed initiative to push higher education into the mobile learning era with the introduction of iPad-based teaching and learning for all Foundation Program students from September 9, 2012. The aim is to encourage within the students the development of independent and life-long learning skills necessary to success in a fast changing world.

The initiative is a unique process in that it witnesses the three institutions working collaboratively on the common vision as the UAE Higher Education iPad Consortium, which will oversee the nationwide launch of over 14,000 iPads - a unique and challenging experience for any learning institution around the world.

The iPad initiative is destined to transform the classrooms of these institutions and also some traditional concepts of teaching and learning. It will firmly embed the Foundations Programs of these institutions in 21st Century learning processes. Students will find new ways of learning that recognizes their aptitude for mobile learning by making their higher education experiences more effective, rewarding, hands-on and fun - and all at their fingertips.

Using an initial 22 Apps, teachers and students will be able to bring the world into the classroom and break down the virtual walls of the classroom, providing students with a truly holistic and heuristic education experience. Importantly, students will become co-creators of their own learning environment through collaborations with their peers and faculty.

To ensure the proper facilitation of the initiative across the three institutions, an iPad steering committee, formed by the three institutions, devised four working groups to implement the program, which are the Pedagogy team, the Content team, the Infrastructure team and the Communication team. These groups also considered issues such as classroom effectiveness, assessments and campus readiness.

Already, after the first few weeks of classes the benefits of the initiative are being seen with students and faculty eagerly adopting the iPads as an integral part of their educational experiences. College leaders in the iPad initiative noted the project showed very tangible evidence of people adapting to a new technology, in a sense of collegiality.
Commitment, Enthusiasm & Engagement drive successful iPad training sessions

As thousands of Foundation Program students were contemplating the beginning of an exciting and challenging academic year, an equally impressive number of faculty members from the Higher College of Technology, Zayed University and UAEU were feverishly coming to grips with their own challenge – that of making iPads part of their teaching repertoire. It was a challenge that since April 2012 has been taken up with great relish, enthusiasm, commitment and energy by the army of faculty members across the three institutions, as they proactively participated in several workshops and training sessions as the mobile learning devices became second nature to them.

The Higher Colleges of Technology’s Khalifa City Women’s College (KCWC) started its training early as it welcomed faculty members from across the UAE in June for a day-long event simulating the use of iPads in higher education. The “Celebrate Teaching & Learning: Sharing the iPad Experience” workshop was designed to have faculty members fully conversant with the use of mobile technologies in education. The workshop consisted of dozens of brief interactive workshops, with key educators from the three institutions sharing ideas and plans for using the iPad to transform teaching and learning in the UAE. Presenters discussed methods to optimize the iPad’s instructional uses, highlighting its value as a modern, paperless tool to increase interactivity and student engagement. Sessions included “Quick and simple instructional movies” and “iBooks Author for iPad,” as well as subject-specific presentations including “Discover geometric shapes” and “Three apps to develop writing skills”. Educators were also given opportunities to brainstorm and share ideas in an “Idea Zone,” where they discussed what they had learned and made plans for the new academic year.

ADWC/KCWC Director Dr. Jace Hargis, a leader in the UAE higher education’s iPad initiative, congratulated all participants who were eager to learn more about the use of iPads in classroom settings, noting the high levels of engagement by all concerned.

“This event has surpassed our expectations for stimulating exciting ideas about teaching with the iPad. It was wonderful to engage in collegial conversations and to share our insights and enthusiasm. We all feel genuinely privileged to be pioneering this cutting-edge approach in our various institutions,” Dr. Hargis said.
An iDesign workshop was then held at ADWC/KWC in the week prior to the start of classes. This iDesign workshop aimed at presenting and practicing model lessons created with the purpose of moving towards the development of a Challenge Based Learning environment at the colleges, where students use the iPad to identify, research and solve problems. The workshop began with model lessons to guide faculty in their lesson planning, as well as to help faculty develop their own ideas within their teams. In a collaborative setting the faculty also worked on actual lessons to showcase their developments.

The goal of the workshop was to have faculty more confident in a variety of areas including solving simple technical problems with the iPad; using a picture editing program; sharing data digitally; developing class activities and projects that teach English through the iPad; choosing appropriate technologies for their language teaching and preparing multiple lesson plans (iPrototypes) using the iPad in ELT.

The ongoing training and development process for HCT’s Math and English Foundations instructors continued when about 550 faculty members attended an iFoundations iForum at the Al Ain Men’s College campus on August 27. The forum provided teachers with an opportunity to work on practical classroom activities that will be directly applicable to their situation in the company of other teachers from across the system.

In the Western region, the HCT Madinat Zayed and Ruwais campuses hosted a one day conference on September 3 to share and develop ways of using the iPad in education. Over the day, different groups explored ways to further integrate use of the devices and to include them in the strategic planning of the colleges using the wealth of applications available to aid teachers and students in their courses. The faculty had worked hard over the summer to bring the iPad into the teaching and learning experience for the students of the Al Gharbia region.
A key component of the iPad initiative has been to keep those faculty and educators who are implementing the program connected so that they can share information & ideas, plan and keep up to date with developments.

As a result, a designated website has been created to facilitate a smooth integration of the new system. The website, http://ipads.hct.ac.ae/, is a collaboration portal which offers educators a common place to share their lesson plans, search for popular Apps, rate Apps and read or review Apps based on their relevance, popularity and educational value as defined by learning outcomes.

Educators can also suggest and categorize Apps, download Apps and share best practices, recommendations, case studies and more through the iPadagogy Blog, Teachers’ Lounge or Discussion Forums found on this website.

The Teachers’ Lounge has been created for Faculty who wish to share best practices, strategies (Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment), peer support, classroom ideas, tips for classroom organization and more in their use of iPads in Education at HCT, ZU and UAEU.

Faculty members can upload and share information, ideas such as videos, apps, teaching tips, iBooks and other resources, or information they may have come across which can help make the teaching and learning process in the classrooms all the more valuable and worthwhile.
iChampions & iVolunteers - the human face of mobile learning technology

While the 14,000 Foundation Program students across the three Federal institutions become acquainted with using iPads in the classroom as the latest learning tool, the initiative could not have been properly administered without the dedication of thousands of faculty and staff who enthusiastically contributed to the launch of the iPad initiative being such a huge success.

From this wide cross-section of educators it is timely to highlight the achievements of two groups – the iChampions and the iVolunteers.

The first intake of iChampions consist of 30 educators chosen from the three institutions, and representing their respective institutions. Their role is to work within their own institutions to train fellow faculty members as “curriculum content creator champions”.

Prior to this regime of training the iChampions participated in a series of intensive and active workshops, working with their peers from the three institutions. The first of these workshops was a two-day event in May at the Zayed University Abu Dhabi campus. Subsequent training workshops were held on June 18&19, followed by an iCelebrate workshop on June 20.

The training, which will continue throughout the first semester, is designed to further prepare each of the iChampions to use iPad tools aligned with foundational learning theories, thereby being able to develop high-quality, course objective-aligned Electronic Learning Objects, which will be added to a UAE iPadagogy repository.

With the unbridled success of the iChampions project a second intake of the iChampions was undertaken and culminated in a total of 120 “iChamps” meeting on August 26 to complete final preparations for the September 9 iPad Initiative launch. The original 30 iChampions then met on August 29 to create a series of iBooks for use by students in the classrooms.

As Chairman of the iPad Initiative Dr. Tayeb Kamali congratulated all those involved in the iChampions project and thanked them for their hard work and dedication in the lead-up to the launch and in the initial phases of the initiative.

In a similar vein to the iChampions, iVolunteers is a program devised by HCT 2nd year IT student Mohammed Khaled Salmen whereby teams of 12 HCT students are selected to act as iPad ambassadors in their respective colleges.

The iVolunteers are made of students from all levels and programs, who are keen to help the new Foundation students, and are empowered to help the Foundations students how to properly use the iPads, as well as help with any technical issues relating to its functions and the Applications.

iVolunteers coordinator Mohammed Khaled Salmen said a big advantage to this project was that the Foundation students can get help and guidance from their peers, with whom they feel comfortable and with whom they can develop a good rapport.
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