

Computers are oversold and underused

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According to new research which studies educational programs in Bahrain, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates, information and communication technology (ICT) is not effectively utilized in classrooms in the Middle East. The new article "Promoting the Knowledge Economy in the Arab World," published in the open access journal *SAGE Open*, discusses the need for a deeper institutional reform that will bring Arab classrooms into the 21st century.

After studying current school inspection and review reports as well as an independent impact study report commissioned by United States Agency for International Development (USAID), author Michael Lightfoot stated that many technology-related policies overlook the real needs of students. Lightfoot wrote that while ICT infrastructure aims to incorporate electronic classes and teaching systems that enhance students' and teachers' technological abilities, in reality it has become little more than a way to mechanically optimize the operation of equipment and to perpetuate cultural traditions.

"This is undoubtedly a reflection of the difficulties inherent in implementing an agenda for modernization and reform within countries which have only been free from colonial domination for a few decades," wrote the author. "It is a symptom of globalization that the pressures for education reform are now coming not from social forces seeking Enlightenment thinking but rather from those that see the development of a knowledge economy as a substitute for oil revenues or profits from real estate."

The author also pointed to teachers' inability to treat students as independent thinkers as an issue that inhibits technology-related educational reform from helping to transform the Middle East into an important part of the [global knowledge economy](#). Ultimately, he called for more rigorous research that goes beyond mere speculation about ICT implementation.

The author wrote, "If the findings from this research are able to identify best practices that can be replicated in different settings, then educationalists can begin to be satisfied that computers in the classroom are not just 'oversold and underused'."

More information: The article, "Promoting the Knowledge Economy in the Arab World" published in *SAGE Open*, is available free at: [sgo.sagepub.com/content/early/ ... 417457.full.pdf+html](http://sgo.sagepub.com/content/early/.../417457.full.pdf+html)

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