

Certificates That Didn't Work

Shokat Heydari

High School Teacher in Tehran

The school where I worked was filled with teachers who had recently obtained their ICDL certificates. Everyone proudly spoke about their high scores, but at the computer desks, the reality was quite different.

Sometimes, when I entered the computer room, I would find my colleagues staring helplessly at their monitors. Some of them still did not know how to properly shut down the system and would press the power button directly, as if dealing with an old television set.

The school principal, despite holding an advanced degree, would call me whenever he needed a research paper or an article. He would sit at his desk, hand me a list of topics, and say, "Go find these for me on the Internet." One day, I politely suggested, "Perhaps you could find some time to learn computer skills yourself." He smiled calmly and replied, "I don't have the time."

Time went by. In a school where everyone had proudly framed their skill certificates, hardly anyone could actually put those skills into practice. The world of education was changing—through the Internet, digital software, and online presentations—but amidst these transformations, many teachers stood still, unwilling to take even a small step forward.

And day by day, I became more convinced that true skill lies in practice, not on paper. Education, above all else, requires the courage to learn anew.

From Certification to Real Competence: An Analysis of the Gap Between Formal Training and Practical Application in the Educational System

Hossein Talebzadeh

Faculty Member, Department of Social Sciences, Farhangian University, Tehran

Introduction:

In recent years, training in information technology skills, including ICDL courses, has been recognized as a necessity for teachers. However, field experiences suggest that despite completing these courses and obtaining official certificates, the practical ability to utilize these skills remains quite limited. This article, drawing on a real-life observation, seeks to analyze this gap and provide practical recommendations for teachers.

Discussion:

The implementation of ICDL training courses for educators was intended to enhance digital literacy among teachers. Most participants successfully completed the courses and achieved acceptable grades. Nevertheless, the realities observed in schools revealed a different picture. Many teachers struggled with even the most basic operations, such as properly turning computers on and off or performing simple online searches.

Several factors contributed to this gap:

Lack of sustained practice: Skills acquired in a classroom setting were not consistently applied in daily work.

Overemphasis on certification over competence: The focus was primarily on obtaining certificates rather than ensuring genuine proficiency.

Inadequate institutional support: There was minimal follow-up training or encouragement from school administrations to reinforce and develop newly learned skills.

Psychological barriers: Fear of technology, resistance to change, and a preference for traditional methods prevented many teachers from actively engaging with digital tools.

Meanwhile, educational systems were rapidly integrating new technologies—learning management systems, multimedia presentations, and online assessments. Teachers who could not adapt risked becoming increasingly disconnected from the evolving needs of students and the broader educational landscape.

Conclusion:

Certificates alone do not equate to competence. Genuine proficiency in any skill, particularly in the realm of information technology, requires continuous practice, real engagement, and a willingness to embrace new learning experiences. Without a culture of ongoing professional development and personal initiative, formal training programs risk becoming mere symbolic gestures rather than agents of real change.

Practical Recommendations for Teachers:

1. Practice regularly: Set aside time each week to work with computers and online tools, even outside of formal duties.
2. Seek help proactively: Consult with colleagues or online resources when encountering technical difficulties.

3. Adopt a growth mindset: View learning new technologies as an opportunity for personal and professional growth, not as a burden.

4. Participate in peer learning communities: Form small groups within the school to share skills and experiences.

5. Focus on practical outcomes: Prioritize using technology in lesson planning, teaching, and assessment over simply acquiring certificates.

6. Stay updated: Continuously explore new educational technologies and seek to integrate them meaningfully into teaching practices.