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Sreejit Chakrabarty, manager, Robotics Labs and Training



Dubai schools go iTech for stress-free learning

Sarwat Nasir

DUBAI — Dubai schools are embracing iPad learning in classrooms as tech companies introduce more education-focused gadgets into the market.

Tech Giant Apple has recently introduced its new sixth generation 9.7-inch iPad, which has features that target students and educators — making it a user-friendly device in replacement of textbooks.

Last week, a distress video was circulating on social media, where a father uploaded footage of his daughter carrying a large backpack with heavy books inside. The UAE Minister of Education had publicly responded, highlighting a platform where ebooks can be downloaded onto a student's personal devices.

For several years, the debate on whether iPads will replace textbooks in schools has been ongoing. Now, tech companies, such as Apple, seem to be making the switch more tempting as they introduce 'affordable' iPads, with classroom-friendly features.

"iPads are a tool that enrich learning experiences, making learning personal to each student. They can help teachers and students to achieve learning outcomes in a more engaging and personalised way as well as encouraging students to become independent learners and thinkers. Having this tool specially devised — keeping learners in mind — allows students to become 21st century learners, creators and innovators," Sreejit Chakrabarty, manager of Robotics Labs and Training at GEMS Dubai American Academy, told *Khaleej Times*.

"iPads allow for flexibility, mobility and make collaboration easy. Students can document and share learning in a variety of spaces and settings. Sharing student learning or student creations is made so easy with journaling apps. Airdrop lets students quickly share documents, images or videos with each other. Meeting the needs of all learners is made possible with the accessibility features that came with iOS 11. Additionally, apps like Dragon Dictation and Read and Write, which support students with special needs."

EDUPAD PRICE STARTS AT DH1,349

For a long time, the Google Chromebook was the most affordable option for pupils, as it is lightweight and had student-friendly features. Now, the new Apple 9.7-inch iPad is challenging the Google Android based devices.

Starting at a price of Dh1,349, it will be able to support nearly 200,000 apps optimised for education.

The Apple Pencil can be used on the iPad, allowing students to edit and produce ebooks and other documents. The education industry has always been an important one for tech firms, with, often, Apple, Microsoft and Google leading the way.

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Sreejit Chakrabarty, manager, Robotics Labs, GEMS Dubai American Academy

Chakrabarty said the students and teachers at the school are already using iPads as a learning tool. A spokesperson from the Next Generation School (NGS) believes that iPads will replace textbooks "in a few years".

Students at NGS also use iPads instead of textbooks for many of their projects. "Students are engaging more in research and projects when iPads are involved since most of them associate iPads with 'fun time', so it has definitely played some role in increasing the energy and engagement in the classroom," the spokesperson said.

"Our students are encouraged to come up with proactive ideas and when they use the iPads during projects they have a lot of space to be creative."

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apps optimised for education available on 9.7-inch new iPad



Apple has recently introduced its new sixth generation 9.7-inch iPad, which has features that target students and educators.

STUDENTS SHARE THOUGHTS ON IMBIBING TECHNOLOGY IN CLASSROOMS

Easy to carry, but...

As a CBSE student, I am more accustomed with the use of textbooks. Studying for hours using iPad is not preferable, especially in CBSE where one has lots of content. However, iPad is useful in one way as it reduces the heavy weight of books that students have to carry to schools. Also, iPad is environment friendly as it reduces the number of trees being cut each year to make textbooks and iPad also offers a wider range of information. Its easier to gather more knowledge than what's limited to textbook and it's easier to carry.



Sreelakshmi, Grade 11

Helpful to students

The launch of affordable iPads is really helpful to students as schools are already integrating technology into lessons. For example, in English class, I need an electronic device to use the app PADLET, research, write essays and create power points. It would be great to have all my textbooks in my iPad rather than carry all of them to school. Furthermore, I don't have to worry about losing textbooks or straining my back. Eliminating textbooks is beneficial to the environment and could help reduce school fees by a small figure. I am glad Apple is providing a way to enhance our learning.



Saher Kapadia, Grade 10

Let's invest in devices

I would personally prefer using an iPad over writing in the copybook. It would save a lot of space in students' bags and most people find it easier to type rather than write something. It is even better for people with bad handwriting or who take a lot of time to write. I think that instead of paying several thousand of dirhams for copy books, that money could easily be invested into the devices. Some teachers may be concerned with some students getting distracted using an iPad, but that issue already happens with phones, so implementing iPads brings in more positive aspects than negative.



Karim zakirov, Grade 10

Paper is not wasted

I personally love how easy studying becomes when using the iPad. It is fast and quick response features ensures a stress-free environment in the classrooms. iPads also considerably help to preserve the environment by saving heaps of paper that could potentially go in the trash but instead we access and use them through the screen. The heavy load of books is minimised by a great deal as they are virtually available through the iPads technology. Having experienced life at school with and without iPads, I would incline towards the use of iPads.



Jamila Jairwala, Grade 11

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Swapna along with her artworks. Born without arms, she resorted to her legs for creativity.

Armless artist hails UAE for supporting determined ones

Ashwani Kumar

ABU DHABI — Impressed by the love and concern the UAE bestows on people of determination, an armless artist from India said "everyone is treated equally in the UAE".

"I know the UAE leaders have termed disabled ones as 'people with determination'. I have a read a lot about this country and rulers supporting those with special needs," Swapna Augustine said.

Swapna was born without arms. However, a determined Swapna turned her legs into hand.

"I drew on paper from as early as Grade 3. I used to eat, write, draw and paint using my legs. I started with paper drawings with crayons and then moved to canvas paintings," she said.

Fascinated by the concept of the 'Year of Zayed' and the vision of the founding father, the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan, Swapna plans to draw a portrait of the UAE's Founding Father.

"I can't do a portrait quickly. I will finish it from my home in Kerala. Now, it's a dream to return to the UAE with painting of Sheikh Zayed and present it to the rulers," said Swapna, who is on a short visit to the UAE.

On Friday, she was at Dalma Mall Abu Dhabi for Mother's Day art competition. Swapna was thoroughly impressed by the work of



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Swapna Augustine, artist

local talents in the competition which was won by Aafra Ibrahim from Baraem Al Ain Private School, followed by Raghad Ali Fahmi from Al Maali International School and Adil Ajith Mamoo from Shining Star International School. Swapna also contributed a painting of a mother and child.

"Not just winners but all of the

MAKING A LIVING THROUGH ART

Swapna Augustine is part of the Association of Mouth and Foot Painting Artists of the World. She is one of the 820 artists from 176 countries. "I started by drawing butterflies and flowers. It was after joining the association that helped me grow as an artist. The association facilitates sale of my paintings. I make a living through the association."

participants have done an awesome work. There were participants from more than 50 schools. I haven't seen such variety of works anywhere else."

Interestingly, none of family members have creative talent. "This is God's gift. I didn't get hands but got this blessing. My father passed away. I have two brothers and a sister. My mother Sofia and siblings lend good support. They all helped me in using my legs for all needs," said Swapna, who hails from Kochi city of south Indian state of Kerala.

She celebrated Vishu festival with her relatives in Dubai. "I will also catch the landmarks across Dubai. I am excited about seeing Burj Khalifa," Swapna added.

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