Enhancing Quality of Technology-Enhanced Learning
at Jordanian Universities
Project Number 544491-TEMPUS-1-2013-1-ES-TEMPUS-SMGR
Grant Agreement for 2013-4568

Quality Advisor Report-July 2016

I had meetings with consortium members in Barcelona, first on April 2016, and the second at AQU in July 2016. The first was a project progress meeting, and the second combined a progress meeting with presentations from AQU on the monitoring and assessment of teaching quality. I have been in regular email/Skype contact with Professor Al-Zoubi about progress.

I worked closely with Professor Al-Zoubi in drafting the request for the project extension.

This the second of the two formal reports I am contracted to provide to the consortium. My role is stated as being "*To support and advise the Project Director in ongoing quality issues relating to the overall operation and progress of the project, (noting also that specific academic quality assurance issues are being addressed by the consortium partners as part of the project scope)*".

However, with the project extension now approved by the European Commission, I will provide a further report towards the end of the project.

I have been asked to focus on:
1. Relevance – progress towards achieving the objectives
2. Efficiency – project direction and management
3. Effectiveness – the roles and function of the consortium
4. Impact – dissemination, communication, and progress towards impact goals
5. Sustainability – planning for viability beyond the period of funding.

The project remains highly relevant in helping Jordanian partners to accelerate the development of eLearning.

The project is supported by an efficient administrative structure and the intranet, which is particularly effective for the reporting of activity and for the preparation of deliverables according to project milestones. The project remains challenged by the continuous problem for Jordanian partners having to secure visas for each mobility to the EU (when the same is not the case for EU partners visiting Jordan). This has added significant administrative overheads, and at times has made it impossible to carry out some mobility activities.

The consortium remains broadly effective, with good levels of participation overall.

I note the deliverables made available on the site. I note also the progress made by the consortium, and the plans for the remaining work. The 3 pilot courses are being delivered, and 3 videos are being finalised. The TEL platform has been completed and is being further refined. The 3 TEL/eLearning pilots have been subject to a survey which is being analysed. UoJ and the Ministry are responsible for DEV4.3 the Manual, along with ENQA. HEAC is responsible for documenting the capacity building activities.

What the capacity building presentations from AQU communicated in July is that is it clearly possible to develop a 'national' robust and quality-assured e-learning assessment system that drives up the quality of teaching and learning. In my first quality report, I emphasised how important it would be for the Jordanian Centre to provide such a service nationally. During the sessions I noted how the AQU developments in teaching quality assessment, and the quality assurance and assessment of eLearning, were based on some key characteristics:

- The metrics and measures for quality assessment were **transparent**;
- AQU was **independent** and was **trusted** by the higher education institutions (HEIs);
- The quality process started as a **voluntary** process – there was rapid 'buy in' by academics and institutions as they saw the value of their excellent teaching and learning being recognised;

- Students then have an **objective** means of evaluating HEIs when they are applying to study there;
- The quality measures for teaching are linked to '**positive reinforcement**' where teachers can be steered towards courses and training. Importantly this recognises that a poor teacher can be helped to become a good teacher – it does not directly follow that poor teaching scores mean you lose your job.

I therefore see the Centre, along with an on-going development and delivery of the eLearning modules across Jordanian partner institutions, as being the critical components in the future impact and sustainability of this project.

One aspect that has caused some problems is the Advisory Committee. The consortium had made initial approaches to international specialists, in the expectation that there would be an opportunity for them to travel to Jordan. It seems clear now that the project cannot use funds for such purposes.

However, international advice and support is crucial in helping the Jordanian Centre to become established and to benefit from the latest knowledge and expertise. So I recommend that those who were approached are contacted again, are informed of the situation about travel to Jordan, but are encouraged to accept an ongoing link with the Centre. They could be invited to identify one or more of the six areas of activity noted below, where they can provide specific advice and support.

During the discussions and the capacity building activity we reviewed areas where the Centre can support Jordanian HEIs beyond the development of teaching quality and eLearning metrics. I noted that there could be specific value in the Advisory Committee linking to policy and activity domains that link the European and Jordanian agendas, in particular:

1. HE Policy and System Modernisation;
2. Innovative Teaching and Learning (ICTs, MOOCS, Open Education Resources etc.);
3. Accreditation and Recognition;
4. Quality Assurance and Quality Assessment;
5. Educator Training and Capacity Building;
6. University Business Links – soft skills, entrepreneurship, innovative businesses.

These themes could be the basis for an initial activity plan for the Jordanian Centre.

Domains 1 and 6 are more 'structural'. They will be a means (1) by which the Bologna Process and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in particular can continue to inform the process of HE system modernisation in Jordan, and by which the impact of HE on business development (2) is being improved through strong links with the provision of soft skills, of business skills, and where business is brought into the design of pedagogy and the delivery of courses (for example see the University Business Cooperation initiative of the European Commission[1]).

The stronger partnership between HE and business is something that is underlined by the recent EU-Jordan Partnership announcement on 20 July 2016[2]. The experts from Jordan to the EU are rather limited in scope to "*a limited number of sectors, such as clothing, phosphates and phosphate-based fertilizers, chemicals, machinery and transport equipment*", and HE has a crucial role in supplying the graduates who can both expand those market areas, and develop new ones – in particular renewable energy which is the focus of the initial courses.

This makes the ongoing delivery (individually and jointly by Jordanian universities) of courses vitally important for impact and sustainability. The courses must be innovative (2), they must be accredited and the outcomes recognised (3), they must be robustly quality assured (4), and there must be resources in place to help teachers/educators gain new skills and competences in innovative teaching (5).

So, the consortium partners have an obligation to ensure that the impact continues beyond the end of the project. If any of the courses are not further developed and delivered in Jordanian HEIs that would be a disaster. The Centre can provide a strategic basis for coordination of activities, but each and every partner has an obligation to work beyond the project end to make the outcomes fully sustainable.

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[1] http://ec.europa.eu/education/tools/university-business_en.htm
[2] http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-2570_en.htm?locale=en

So in the final phase of the project the Centre and the courses are the basis for the future, and I will monitor closely the plans and activities of the consortium in securing sustainability,

Professor Michael Blakemore
External Evaluator
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