

# **Raising the Quality of Teacher Education Programmes in Palestine through Technology Enhanced Learning, Teaching and Assessment (RQTEPP-TELTA)**



Funded by the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

**WORK PACKAGES 6, 10**

**Deliverable 6.1 and 10.3.1 - Design of TELE - SLR**

**TECHNOLOGY ENHANCED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT –  
SMART LEARNING ROOM (TELE-SLR)**

**CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS REPORT**

**June 2016**

**Project number: 561670-EPP-1-2015-1-UK-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP**



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Work Package 6 in the RQTEPP-TELTA Project concerns the design, planning and development of the concept of the Technology Enhanced Learning Environment and Smart Learning Rooms (TELE-SLR), and subsequent construction and integration and use of the TELE-SLR within the BA Basic Education Degree Programmes that is the focus of Work package 1.

This Contextual Analysis Report provides a contextual analysis of the existing ICT environment in the three Palestinian partner universities; Al-Azhar University, Gaza, Birzeit University and Hebron University. The ultimate goal for this Work Package is the construction of TELE-SLRs in each partner university. The contextual analysis explains the setting and environment in which the TELE-SLRs will be constructed. It addresses what has been found out, what is already available, which aspects need to be enhanced or improved, and what are the possible threats for reaching the goal. The information is based on discussions with the Work Package 6 Teams and other relevant staff members at the three universities involved in the project during a number of online meetings and two site visits to Palestine conducted in December 2015 and February 2016. This document also informs decisions made about the overall design concept of the TELE-SLRs and their equipment (See Deliverable 6.1 and 10.3.2). The Report is divided into three sections; one dedicated to each of the three universities.

## 2. AL-AZHAR UNIVERSITY, GAZA

Information regarding Al-Azhar University is based on online communication and reports from other project members. This is because applications for permits to enter Gaza were rejected twice, so the Work Package 6 Project Team Leader has not been able to visit the University in order to see the facilities in person.

IN order to meet their needs in accommodating huge numbers of students, Al-Azhar plans to equip two different types of rooms. One room will be converted into a technologically well-equipped lecture hall designed to accommodate at least 200 students. The other room will be a workshop laboratory type room for groups of approximately 40 students. This will provide student teachers with the opportunity to learn how to use ICT in practice by experimenting with it. The final layout for the rooms still needs to be designed.

The rooms are in a very basic condition and require substantial renovation and preparation, including painting, air conditioning, curtains etc. Wireless network connections are not present so they will have to be built. However, construction of properly working fast WLAN will be among the biggest technical challenges for the TELE-SLR in Al-Azhar. This view is also confirmed by Technical Director of the Faculty of Education. In addition, in Gaza many unpredictable factors affect the construction process; while purchasing and getting clearance to transport the needed equipment into Gaza is likely to be very difficult and slow. Also repairs and service in case of malfunctions or breakdowns are likely to be difficult to have in place. It is therefore necessary to have a clear contingency plan. A large part of the needed software already exists or is freely available. Many IT-

systems and learning environments are also in use; however, it is not clear how effectively these are used to support teaching and learning rather than just to deliver materials to students etc.

### **3. BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY, RAMALLAH, PALESTINE**

Birzeit University has allocated two rooms with a similar floor plan for the construction of SLRs in the Faculty of Education. The rooms are planned to be fitted for a maximum number of 30 students each. The rooms are deemed suitable for the purpose and offer a solid basis for the SLR construction.

Although the rooms are ready, they need improvement in several areas. Interiors need complete renovation, including painting of the walls, carpeting, acoustic panels and suitable lighting and furniture etc. to be modern learning environments. Also electric wiring with power outlets to match the new requirements needs to be planned and installed. Wireless network is essential for the proper operation of the SLRs. In the Faculty of Education a wireless network exists, but its capacity and reliability have to be increased in order to serve needs caused by heavy daily use.

Birzeit University has a good amount of technical ICT-expertise among its technical staff and the basic ICT-infrastructure at the university appears to be solid enough to support construction of the SLR. Cooperation with the technical staff seems to be working, and ongoing technical support is vital for the process of installing of the purchased equipment. The university already provides Google's cloud services which are offered to the students, as well as Mahara learning environment, Ritaj and other it-systems, which can be utilised in the TELE-SLR. However, it is not sure how effectively these are used to support teaching and learning, rather than just act as a repository or means to deliver materials to students. Many of the needed applications are however free and they can be used directly via the computers' web browsers.

Possible threats hindering the installation and use of the TELE-SLRs are that the wireless network in the TELE-SLR doesn't reach the capacity and reliability of what is required for it to work effectively for the purposes envisaged. The classroom not being connected to the internet would present a serious and difficult challenge to the effective use of the facility. This point has to be taken into consideration when purchasing the equipment. Technology that is solely dependent on internet connection can be problematic. Technical difficulties can also be expected in the early stages of the operational use of the TELE-SLRs. Training of the academic staff in how to use the new technologies efficiently and versatilely will be essential to the outcomes of the whole project. The most commonly used technologies among the academic staff at present are digital projectors, PowerPoint presentations, as well as the use of online collaboration platforms such as Moodle. Therefore the leap into using more versatile mobile technology in different ways is likely to be considerable for some colleagues. Also, if equipment needs to be imported from Europe, it may take longer than expected to receive them.

#### 4. **HEBRON UNIVERSITY, HEBRON**

The Faculty of Education at Hebron University has several rooms that are available and may be constructed as TELE-SLRs. The rooms vary in size and allow different kinds of rooms to be constructed. One of the rooms is larger, and could hold 35 to 40 students, which is the number Hebron is aiming for. The other rooms are smaller, and if the number of intended users is too high, the rooms might be cramped in which case effective use of the technology may be hindered. The rooms in the Faculty can be built for slightly different purposes: the large room would be for more general use with a large group; while the smaller room may be used for smaller groups working on specific innovative projects; e.g. projects with building kits, stop-motion animation and other creative work.

The strengths and weaknesses are broadly similar to those at Birzeit University. The capacity and reliability of the wireless network are seemingly an issue and they need to be improved to be sufficient for the extensive needs of the TELE-SLR. The rooms themselves need to be renovated completely to be modern learning environments. This includes painting the walls, carpeting, installing acoustic panels and suitable lighting and purchasing the right kind of furniture. IN addition, electrical wiring with power outlets to match the new requirements needs to be planned and installed. Many IT-systems and services, such as Google, Mahara and Moodle are already being used at the university. However, it is not sure how effectively these are used to support teaching and learning rather than just to deliver materials to students. Many of the needed applications are however free and they can be used directly via computers' web browsers.

Possible threats hindering the project might be that the wireless network in the TELE-SLR doesn't reach the capacity and reliability of what is expected from it. Technical difficulties may also be expected in the early stages of the TELE-SLRs' operational use. Communication before and during the actual construction period is important to make sure, that the original plan is followed. Training of the academic staff how to use the new technologies efficiently and versatilely will be essential to the outcomes of the whole project. There are staff at the University whose technical knowledge and skills are at a good level, and they are capable of building a TELE-SLR. If equipment needs to be imported from Europe, it may take longer than expected to receive them.

The University already has a number of interactive Smart-boards that are not currently being used. These might be available to be used in the project. However, the quality and efficiency of these equipment has to be evaluated first.

