

Raising the Quality of Teacher Education Programmes in Palestine through Technology enhanced learning, teaching and assessment (TELTA) RQTEPP-TELTA

**Funding Proposal for Erasmus + Key Action 2: Capacity Building Action in Higher Education
(Formerly Tempus: Reform of Higher Education through International University Cooperation)**

Information and Preliminary Concept Paper

Key features of the proposal

Funding agency	European Commission: The Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA)												
Size of Grant	Minimum €500,000 to maximum €1,000,000 Total co-financing contribution from partners is a minimum of 10% of the sum applied for.												
Project duration	36 months												
Type of Project	Joint Project – National Project Joint National Projects target one Partner Country (Palestine) and focus on the national priorities of the Partner Country. Proposals must be submitted by groupings of institutions involving <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • at least 3 higher education institutions from a partner country; • at least 3 higher education institutions from the EU, each from a different member state. 												
Proposed universities	The three universities from Palestine are <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Al Azhar University 2. Birzeit University 3. Hebron University The three universities proposed from the EU are <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Canterbury Christ Church University, UK (lead applicant) 2. Fontys University of Applied Sciences, Netherlands 3. University of Eastern Finland, Finland 												
Relevant Programme theme	Curriculum reform This involves modernisation of curricula in academic disciplines identified as priorities by the partner countries using the European Credit Transfer System (ECTS), the three cycle system and the recognition of degrees.												
Relevant National Priority of Palestine	Teacher training and education sciences												
Tentative time table (dates to be confirmed)	<table style="width: 100%; border: none;"> <tr> <td>Budget announcement:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">December 2013</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Call for proposals:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">7 October 2014</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Submission of proposals:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">10 February 2015</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Notification of outcome of application:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">10 August 2015</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Date of signing grant agreement:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">10 September</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Commencement of Project activities:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">15 October 2015</td> </tr> </table>	Budget announcement:	December 2013	Call for proposals:	7 October 2014	Submission of proposals:	10 February 2015	Notification of outcome of application:	10 August 2015	Date of signing grant agreement:	10 September	Commencement of Project activities:	15 October 2015
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Contextual background

A systemic approach to upgrading the quality of the teaching profession has been adopted in recent years in Palestine. Three major government driven initiatives have contributed to this process. The first of these is the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE)'s five year *Education Development Strategic Plan (EDSP) (2008-2012)*, which focused upon improving overall quality of education in Palestine. The second is the *Teacher Education Strategy in Palestine (2008)*, which outlines a vision for quality teacher education and provides recommendations for minimum requirements of teacher education programmes. The third initiative is the development of the *Professional Standards for New Teachers (2010)*, which provide the performance benchmarks that new teachers would need to demonstrate upon graduation of their teacher education programme.

The realisation of the vision of the Teacher Education Strategy for a new generation of well-qualified knowledgeable and skilful teachers is dependent upon the reform of teacher education programmes in universities. This requires reform of both the courses of study and also the practicum or field experience component of the programmes. Courses need to be updated to ensure that they are relevant and provide opportunities for student teachers to develop knowledge, understanding, skills, attitudes and values to become effective teachers. This also requires that the practicum or field experience component needs to be much more substantial than existing norms both in terms of provision of time and quality opportunities for students to practise and learn the craft of teaching.

Some important aspects of the reform of teacher education programmes have been addressed in some universities through The World Bank funded *Teacher Education Improvement Project (TEIP Component One): Strengthening school-based practice of pre-service teacher education programmes for grades 1-4* (for which academic staff from Canterbury Christ Church University are the international consultants). The TEIP is a four-year (2011 – 2015) development initiative designed to support the realisation of the vision of the Teacher Education Strategy. The TEIP is contributing through the development of a *Readiness to Teach Index (RTTI)* of competencies linked explicitly to the *Professional Standards for New Teachers* that student teachers need to demonstrate upon graduation of their teacher education degree programme. The TEIP has also developed a remodelled practicum that requires a substantial period of time (340 hours) spent in school spread over three years of degree programmes. This is also supported by a university practicum course consisting of 96 hours in six semesters. The TEIP has also established partnerships with schools and provided systematic training of school teachers to be effective mentors of the student teachers. In May 2013 the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission (AQAC) announced that it will require all degree level teacher education programmes in Palestine to meet criteria that are linked to the minimum practicum requirements and the achievement of the RTTI competencies developed in the Teacher Education Improvement Programme.

Rationale for the Proposal

Despite the significant advances outlined in the previous section, a number of key obstacles and challenges remain to the development of quality teacher education programmes in Palestinian universities. Firstly, although the TEIP has provided the framework and components for a much more substantial practicum provision and, through the RTTI, a mechanism for ensuring that student

teachers are able to demonstrate that they have reached the Professional Standards, the remit of the TEIP Project did not include the development of the wider university teacher education curricula that should support and prepare students for effective Practicum Field Experiences. Consequently, although Practicum provision has been strengthened and enhanced considerably in participating universities, there remains a strong need to address the challenge of ensuring the systematic and coherent development of teacher education courses/modules so that they are aligned with and support the new Practicum programmes. University courses need to be renewed to provide opportunities for student teachers to develop pedagogical knowledge, understanding and skills that are grounded in what is considered to be effective practice internationally, that are relevant to local contextual needs and that can be applied through progressive practicum field experiences.

In addition, it has been identified that a major area of need is the preparation of teachers who have the knowledge, skills, and strategies to be able to identify and support effectively the diverse learning needs of learners (including those with Special Educational Needs) to ensure equitable accessibility and inclusion for all. At present there are few courses in teacher education that address this need fully and very few academic staff with sufficient background to develop strong courses in this area. A further key area of development that requires attention is the need for student teachers to develop knowledge, understanding and skills in how to use appropriate information and communications educational technology to support effective and efficient teaching and learning across the school curriculum.

Alongside these needs is the challenge of developing capacity among academic staff in the universities to be able to teach effectively using higher education pedagogy that models good practice in line with current international approaches to teacher education and supports student teachers to develop their own knowledge, understanding and skills in effective practice for the 21st century.

A third challenge is the need to prepare both academic staff and students to use relevant technological advances to support and enhance learning, teaching and assessment both at university and also at school in order to prepare both university students and school pupils with relevant 21st century skills to meet the challenges of learning and working in a rapidly changing world. A final challenge is to develop the systems and capacity to ensure the on-going renewal and improvement of new teacher education programmes in the light of practice and new developments in the field. This requires the development of a research active culture in which academic staff work collaboratively to research practice and draw upon this research to inform and enhance the continuing development of their teacher education programmes.

The proposed programme, while building upon recent advances in some Palestinian universities, particularly in terms of Practicum development, will add substantial value by addressing key areas of development not yet addressed by existing initiatives. This includes comprehensive renewal of teacher education curricula in participating universities to ensure that they are aligned coherently to the new Practicum framework developed by TEIP which is envisaged to be used by all universities from September 2014; the development of knowledge and skills in order to address the diverse learning needs of all learners and the ability to utilise new advances in technology to enhance and make their own teaching more relevant to the vision expressed in the *Teacher Education Strategy in Palestine*. Alongside these areas of curriculum development, academic staff at the participating

universities will be supported through systematic, ongoing capacity building to support further development of their own higher education pedagogical strategies and research practice.

Aims and objectives

Overarching aim

To upgrade the quality of teacher education programmes in participating universities in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank of Palestine through development and application of technology enhanced learning, teaching and assessment (TELTA) and capacity building of academic staff in higher education pedagogy and research.

Specific Objectives

1. To renew teacher education degree programmes in participating Palestinian universities so that they are linked explicitly to and support Practicum Field Experience and prepare student teachers to identify and support effectively the diverse learning needs of learners (including those with Special Educational Needs) to ensure equitable accessibility and inclusion for all.
2. To develop bespoke digital learning platforms, facilities and pedagogical models to support the innovative and effective use of technology to enhance learning, teaching and assessment in teacher education degree programmes.
3. To develop capacity among academic staff to utilise modern, student-centred, interactive teaching approaches and strategies and use technology effectively to support and enhance learning, teaching and assessment.
4. To develop capacity among academic staff to research their practices and draw upon these to inform on-going improvement of the programmes.
5. To establish quality assurance frameworks and mechanisms in line with recognised international good practice.

Summary of Work Packages

The proposed project aims to build upon the previous mentioned initiatives, address the obstacles and challenges outlined above and add considerable value to the design and realisation of teacher education programmes in Palestine through the achievement of the outputs listed below. In the proposal that is submitted, outputs are to be defined and elaborated in the form of Work Packages which combined together will form the Project Work Plan. Each work package will have a number of associated deliverables or tangible outputs.

Work package	Type	Title	Lead university
1.	Preparation	<i>Preparation</i> This includes all the preparatory activities required to begin the project implementation stage. It also includes the collection of baseline data and a strategy for designing the Smart Learning Rooms	CCCU
2.	Implementation	<i>BA Primary Education Degree Programme Renewal</i>	CCCU

		Specific deliverables include: curricular frameworks, detailed course outlines; assessment frameworks, tasks and criteria explicitly linked to Practicum Field Experiences.	
3.	Implementation	<i>Diversity and inclusion pathway and courses</i> The Degree programme includes a pathway of courses, leading to a specialisation / minor, that focuses upon developing capacity among student teachers to identify and support the diverse learning needs (including Special Educational Needs) of learners based upon principles of equitable accessibility and inclusion for all.	UEF
4.	Implementation	<i>Technology Enhanced Learning Teaching and Assessment (TELTA pathway and courses)</i> The degree programme includes a pathway of courses, including a minor which focuses upon developing capacity among student teachers to utilise technology effectively and efficiently to support and enhance learning teaching and assessment.	Fontys
5.	Implementation	<i>Capacity building in Higher Education Pedagogy</i> The development of a training programme which will lead to enhanced capacity among academic staff to utilise modern, student centred, interactive teaching approaches and strategies and use technology effectively to support, enhance and sustain learning, teaching and assessment in work packages 1, 2 and 3..	CCCU
6.	Implementation	<i>Research capacity building strategy</i> This aims to enhance the capacity among academic staff to research their practices and draw upon these to inform on-going improvement of the programme and raise the research profile of academic staff, faculties of education and the universities.	Fontys
7.	Implementation	<i>Technology enhanced learning environment</i> Establishment of a well-equipped learning environment that comprises a tailor-made digital learning platform and “smart learning rooms” in each of the participating Palestinian universities, which are used to support the movement from traditional to transformational ways of within work packages 1, 2 and 3	UEF
8.	Management	<i>Project Management Plan</i> This includes the plan for managing all aspects of the project and the protocol for effective communication.	CCCU
9.	Quality	<i>Quality Plan</i> This includes the approaches and strategies for internal and external evaluation. It also includes requirements and processes to assure the quality of the degree programmes and Diploma in line with recognised international good practice and Palestinian national requirements.	CCCU
10.	Dissemination and Exploitation	<i>Dissemination and Exploitation Strategy</i> This includes the strategy for ongoing dissemination of project developments and outputs through publications, conferences and/or other events. It also includes strategies to further exploit Project Outcomes to extend impact and ensure developments are embedded and change is transformational..	CCCU

Key Activities

It is expected that the Project aim, objectives, work packages and associated deliverables will be achieved through the following key activities:

1. Study visits by academic staff from the partner universities in Palestine to the EU partner universities to learn about and gain experience in focussed aspects of higher education programme design, constructivist learner-centred higher education pedagogy, technology enhanced teaching, learning and assessment and approaches for addressing diverse learning needs.
2. Working visits to Palestine by academic staff of the EU universities to work collaboratively with Palestinian colleagues on specific aspects of programme, course and curricula design and capacity building.
3. The development of the specific work packages to achieve the project aims and outputs.
4. On-going online communication among partners to facilitate development and understanding.
5. On-going online collaborative learning projects among students of the participating universities.
6. Collaborative research into the processes of programme and course development and the effectiveness of new practices.
7. Dissemination of project outcomes through publications, conferences and/or other events.

Target sectors that will benefit

The proposed programme has the potential to bring profound change and wide-ranging benefits across a number of key sectors of Palestinian society; as follows:

1. Universities and faculties of education will benefit through the enhanced reputation that comes with recognition of the quality of their teacher education programmes.
2. Academic staff in faculties of education will benefit through development of skills in programme and course design and opportunities to further develop, enhance, apply and transform knowledge, understanding and skills in learner centred higher education pedagogy and technology enhanced learning, teaching and assessment (TELTA).
3. Student teachers at university will benefit from opportunities that the new programmes provide for them to develop 21st century knowledge, understanding, skills and attributes through their university courses; and opportunities to apply and further develop these through a coherent and progressive sequence of Practicum experiences in schools.
4. Partner schools and their teachers will benefit from the enhanced and new knowledge, understanding and skills that will be shared during partnership activities between university and schools and in particular that student teachers bring to the school during practicum. These activities have the potential to inform the development of the school teachers' own knowledge, understanding and skills.
5. Children in schools across Palestine will benefit from the wider range of learning opportunities provided by a well-qualified force of new teachers who possess 21st century knowledge, understanding, skills and attributes.

6. Ultimately, society as a whole will benefit from a better educated population and a workforce that possesses relevant skills to enable it to meet more effectively the advances and challenges of learning, living and working in a rapidly changing global economy.