A report on a visit to the Educational Institutions of the European partners

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1- Introduction

After the 2nd workshop in Jericho which was part of RUFO project first phase, the correspondents of the Palestinian partners visited different educational institutions (Spain, Belgium and France). The main mission of this visit as agreed upon by Jericho participants as follows:

- Understanding the needs behind the development of E-learning courses.
- Studying the organizational structure of the team that will deliver E-learning courses.
- Surveying the feedback about the experiences of E-learning abroad.
- Analyzing the relation between the institutions involved and the accreditation authorities by exchanging experiences.
- Studying the networking.
- Analyzing the different E-learning practices and standards.
- Looking for material resources related to the 5 projects.
- Studying the possibility for the training of Palestinians in certain aspects linked to the project such as material developing, multimedia training & evaluation.
- Face 2 face meetings with E-learners.
- Conducting workshops by experts experienced in this field.

In order to get a whole perspective the European experience with these missions objectives in mind two groups were formed:

**Group I :** AlQuds University (QU), AlQuds Open University (QOU), Palestine Polytechnic University (PPU). Visited De Basque University (Bilbao), CNAM University (Bordeaux).

**Group II :** Birzeit University (BZU), An-Najah National University (NNU). Visited University Libre de Bruxelles ULB (Brussels, Belgium), Lille -1 University (Lille, France).

In the following section of this report we describe the various visits and activities performed by the two groups, we will summarize the groups findings in the third section of this report, and in the final section we reflect on our visits with presentation of our recommendations and conclusions.
2- Visits Activities

2.1 Group I Visits

2.1.1 University De Basque (Bilbao) Visit (13-15/3/2006)

The University De Basque (Bilbao) is experienced for its virtual campus (VC) courses; the purpose of the visit of group I to this university is to get acquainted with the working modalities used by the people of this university. The meetings were organized in two days as follows.

Day 1.

The group were presented by an overview of the structure of ICT department and how courses are developed in the virtual university (VC). Two types of online courses are developed; full VC, on line supported face to face courses. This visit is focused on the full VC courses.

The VC started in 98/99 with 6 courses, 135 students, the number of courses this current year is 250 courses with 6500 students.

The ICT is used to support the development and running of the courses in VC. It consists of the following staff:

- Director
- Vice Director
- Technical Staff
  - 3 multimedia
  - 1 pedagogical
  - 1 Moodle technician
  - 1 old platform technician
  - 3 Authoring tools technician
  - 4 eKasi technician
  - 1 for coordination

The procedure to develop full online course is as follows:

1- The department decides on courses to be offered virtually (sep-Feb)
2- A bid is started to choose the author
3- Training
4- Material preparation and evaluation

{ Feb-June }
In order to motivate authors authoring an online is taken for the purpose of promotion

Evaluation is performed by the author in form of questionnaires filled by students taken the courses.

An overview of the different platforms that where used were presented. Such platforms are Gela Aula, Moodle and eKasi\(^1\). The reason for having different platforms for portability reasons. eKasi is mainly used for mandatory courses, Gela Aula is for elective courses. Most elective course are virtual. A presentation of the authoring tool (AUTRe\(^2\)) is made.

Day 2

During this day issues for training, course development, teaching methodology, and cooperation amongst universities were discussed. An example of the on line training course is shown.

**Training** when the departments decides upon the list of courses to be offered virtually, a compulsory training is conducted from march to June. An initial meeting is conducted to explain on line course development. Main topics of the training course:
- Introduction to e-learning and motivation.
- E-learning features
- ...
- ..
- ...

Skills obtained at the end of the training:
- How to organize a training course
- To know the characteristic of virtual courses
- To be positive
- Designing axioms: ideas activities assignments
- To use different resources
- To encourage creativity and innovation

Relation between the instructor and the technical staff is informal.

The methodology used in course development is RAPID e-learning which is a mixture of tools, training and support for technical and pedagogical issues is provided when needed.

Methodology of teaching is to build a community of learning and composed of the following three components:

\(^1\) [http://ekasi.ehu.es](http://ekasi.ehu.es)

\(^2\) [http://autore.ehu.es](http://autore.ehu.es)
1- Tutor  
2- Students  
3- Contents  

With activities to join the three components.

**The basic idea is to motivate students to acquire knowledge through interaction amongst students themselves rather than through the tutor. The role of the tutor is to help student to build he knowledge.**

The university is partner in the G9³ project. The fields of cooperation in this project are:

- Students can register courses in any partner university.
- Cooperation in virtual courses.
- Cooperation in Doctoral courses
- Sharing of resources.

### 2.1.2 CNAM AQUITAINE University (BOREAUX Visit (16/3/2006))

CNAM is an ODL university and divided into 21 regions, AQUITAINE is one of these regions. Each region is autonomous administratively and financially but follows the regulation of the headquarter in Paris.

This center administered by 15 staff, with 1800 students. It has 60 degrees and about 400 modules, taught by 235 part-time instructors. The students can register for face 2 face or online courses. The educational center offers online course if there is inadequate lecturers or insufficient number of students in a single region.

**Course development:**

To develop a new selected course a general committee decides the budget and the funds; which is a bout 15000 euro. The authors must follow certain regulations. The copyright of the developed course is negotiable.

The education center offer two types of courses:

- Evening courses
- E learning courses
  - Plei@d
  - Studio courses

Their aim is to use blended learning (Hybrid Learning), this methodology uses the face 2 face learning and distance learning. This methodology consists of the following methods of learning:

- Theoretical material using studio courses.

3 [www.uni-g9.net/portal](http://www.uni-g9.net/portal)
• Evening courses (seminars)
• Distance learning using Plei@d
• Short home work

Training:
Technology is just a tool; training does not aim at transforming the authors to be computer scientists.

2.1.3 CNAM University (Paris) Visit (17/3/2006)

An overview of e-Learning at CNAM was presented in the first session. The second session presented a case study of a module using plei@d. the name of this unit is "Management of Training Departments", which consists of 12 units (9 face-to-face, 3 distance).

2.1.4 Findings

These are summarized in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Group I</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Platforms</td>
<td>Bilbao</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoring Tools</td>
<td>AUTORe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>1 training Course(on line)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Development</td>
<td>RAPID eLearning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Methodology</td>
<td>Fully virtual/ Blended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICT Staff involved in eLearning</td>
<td>Director + Vice_director + Expert Technicians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentive</td>
<td>Promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis</td>
<td>Student interactivities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation</td>
<td>Surveys</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- CNAM

* (Trust on the author experience)
2.1.5 Recommendations & Conclusions

From what we had seen from the various visits we did observe the following:

1- Emphasis in the universities visited are on students learning by interaction and on the tutor as guiding them to use the resources.
2- Most contents of the courses are in different forms; HTML, PDF, PPT, DOC.. 
3- The actors in the development are the subject matter, the pedagogical expert and the technology expert.
4- There are incentives for developing E-learning courses.
5- Various platforms are used, some are open source others are home developed.
6- ICT centers staff is limited to few people.
7- Technological and pedagogical experts are available for the course author
8- Though there are similarities on the general rules for developing on line courses, there is no agreed method on how the different components interact.
9- There is a compromise in using multimedia with regard to cost and benefits.

In view of the above we see that the Palestinian universities has the technological infrastructure to develop on line courses, but needs to find ways of integrating the various components (pedagogical. Technical, subject matter).

We propose the following:

1- To form a group to form a methodology for developing on line courses in a systematic way within the Palestinian universities.
2- There should be a support centre for the development of on line courses.
3- Development of common courses that students can take from any Palestinian university on line.
4- We need to develop training courses tutors and authors on elearning.
5- Support the universities to purchase necessary packages and authoring tools necessary for the development of on line courses.

2.2 Group II Visits

2.2.1. L'Université Libre de Bruxelles (13-14 March 2006)

Day 1:
Visit of Centre des Technologies au service de l’Enseignement (CTE) – ULB, Welcomed by Pierre QUERTENMONT (international relations attaché). ULB

Welcome and presentation of the CTE by Françoise d’Hautcourt, Director.

Mission of CTE:
Structure of CTE:

CTE consists of 5 specialized units:

1. Audio visual Unit: install projectors, technical support, etc…
2. ICT for education Unit: (technical and pedagogy)
3. Image Unit: Multimedia Production Unit
4. Continuing education Unit.
5. Technical support for language teaching Unit.

CTE Staff: Total of 23 people.

Case Study:

COUPOLE Project (A research project 2003-2005) by Franklin Kimbimbi, Project coordinator

Coupole Objectives:
The coupole is the result of a partnership inside the Brusselles Wallonia European University Centre. Coordinated by CTE-ULB. Financed by a ministerial initiative fund, Coupole aims at establishing an online learning centre inside the Brussels Wallonia European University Centre, to meet the following objectives:

- Gathering distance learning courses developed in the Pole, and thus benefit from the experience of each other.
- Building capacity in distance learning through training and coaching.
- Putting in a common pool pedagogical resources (learning object…)
- Negotiating with external partners the right for the utilization of courses that are developed or the right to register for such courses.
- Providing appropriate tutoring for students.

The services offered by Coupole:

- Technical and pedagogical training.
- Coaching.
- Hosting on LMS Platform (WebCT)
- Paid students assistantship.

Steps:

- Call for proposals.
- Selection.
- Training.
- Coaching.
Role playing of a selection committee:
We were presented by 6 applications for e-learning project proposals. After reading and studying the 6 proposals we developed an evaluation grid to be able to study, to evaluate, and to select the most suitable proposals and then decided after a debate discussions on the successful ones. The developed grid took into consideration a number of criteria related to the on hand proposals, (note the following grid)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nature of the course</strong></td>
<td>Number of Benefited institutions</td>
<td>The course is taught in more than 5 institutions</td>
<td>The course is taught in 3-4 institutions</td>
<td>The course is taught in two institutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of the course</strong></td>
<td>Service course</td>
<td>Faculty course</td>
<td>Department course</td>
<td>Elective course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of benefited students</strong></td>
<td>1000-2000</td>
<td>200-1000</td>
<td>50-200</td>
<td>0-50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target Groups</strong></td>
<td>The course has more than one type of target groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The course can be delivered to one type of target group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Electronic Format</strong></td>
<td>All the course is available in an electronic format</td>
<td>75%-99% of the course is available in an electronic format</td>
<td>50-74 % of the course is available in an electronic format</td>
<td>0-49% of the course is available in electronic format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Learning Objectives</strong></td>
<td>All the course objectives are clear</td>
<td>Most of the objectives are clear</td>
<td>Few of the objectives are clear</td>
<td>No clear objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>E- learning content</strong></td>
<td>All the elements of the E-Learning content are stated</td>
<td>Most of the E-Learning content are stated</td>
<td>Few of the E-Learning content are stated</td>
<td>No clear E-Learning contents presented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rationale</strong></td>
<td>Students Need</td>
<td>There is at least 3 clear and relevant statements that explain the need of the online course for the students (questionnaire, ...)</td>
<td>There is at least 2 clear and relevant statements that explain the need of the online course for the students</td>
<td>There is at least 1 clear and relevant statements that explain the need of the online course for the students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers Need</strong></td>
<td>There is at least 3 clear and relevant statements that explain the need of the online course for the</td>
<td>There is at least 2 clear and relevant statements that explain the need of the online course for the</td>
<td>There is at least 1 clear and relevant statements that explain the need of the online course for the</td>
<td>There is no clear or relevant statements that explain the need of the online course for the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>teachers</td>
<td>the teachers</td>
<td>the teachers</td>
<td>the teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institution Need</strong></td>
<td>There is at least 3 clear and relevant statements that explain the need of the online course for the institution</td>
<td>There is at least 2 clear and relevant statements that explain the need of the online course for the teachers Institution</td>
<td>There is at least 1 clear and relevant statements that explain the need of the online course for the teachers Institution</td>
<td>There is no clear or relevant statements that explain the need of the online course for the teachers Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Partnerships</strong></td>
<td>External and Internal partners</td>
<td>There are external and internal partners</td>
<td>There are external only</td>
<td>There are internal partners only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environment</strong></td>
<td>Institution support</td>
<td>At least one relevant evidence showing institution support for developing and delivering online courses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Directorship support</strong></td>
<td>At least one relevant evidence showing directorship support for developing online courses</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>No evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers previous Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>E-learning Knowledge and skills</td>
<td>The teacher has a clear theoretical knowledge in e-learning concepts and has developed online courses</td>
<td>The teacher has a clear theoretical knowledge in e-learning concepts</td>
<td>The teacher has a superficial knowledge in e-learning concepts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ICT skills</strong></td>
<td>The teacher has high level of ICT skills</td>
<td>The teacher has medium level of ICT skills</td>
<td>Low level</td>
<td>The teacher has no skills in ICT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teachers availability</strong></td>
<td>Development period</td>
<td>The course development stage will be ended in 3</td>
<td>The course development stage will be ended in</td>
<td>The course development stage will be ended in</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Day 2:
**Case Study “Formadis” project** by Eric UYTTEBROUK, director of TICE Unit.

**Partnership:** LabSET/ ULg, CTE/ULB.

**Objectives:**
- Defining Key Success Factors for publishing on-line courses.
- Summarizing the lessons learned from this project.

Started on 2001, approximately 10-12 accompanied/ guided course each year.
Coaching the teacher while putting his first course on-line:
  - Educational and technical training.
  - Follow up during 20 days.
  - Providing technical assistant.

**The investigation:**
Conducted on 13 Formadis projects.
13 questionnaires filled out by the guides (one by team).
Supplemented by participants questionnaires, further information requested from the guides by telephone if necessary.
To avoid the repetition of foreseeable problematic scenarios:
  - Analyzing in a transverse way the recurring difficulties.
  - Synthesizing the answers already brought in order to propose new answers.
    - Assistance with the selection.
    - Assistance with the accompaniment.
    - Assistance with the projects.

**4 critical dimensions:**
- Directorship.
- Participants.
- Coaching.
- Content.

**Some encountered problems:**
- Withdrawal of the project after selection.
- No signature of convention.
- No respect of convention.
- Minimum support.
- Slow institutional procedure.
Measurements taken:

- Providing quality information for the participants and the directorships on the project Formadis.
- Insisting on the need to provide more time.
- Taking into account the institutional factors at the time of the selections.
- Openness on other platforms (in particular Open Source)

Summary presentation of Brussels study visit to experts from Lille1 whom they do not know these particular projects (Daniel Poisson and Christian Ladesou).

Comments on the presented materials.

Our comments:

Criteria for selecting the proposal:
- More information is required from the applicants (action plans, process, and readiness).
- More guidelines should be provided to the applicants (to support claims, evidences, documents...).
- More tools should be adopted in order to take better decisions (comments on the proposed proposal, visits of the proposees, final interviews)
- The questions should be more precise and clear.

About the project process and outputs:
- There should be more attention to pedagogical issues while developing the courses.
- There should be a monitoring and evaluation system while developing the courses.
- The training/coaching should not be four successive days; some time should be left between the training sessions so the participants apply the skills and knowledge they gain.
- The courses should be evaluated according to certain criteria and standards (like the standards of online contents).
- There should be some kind of incentives for the subject matter experts.
- There is a need for specialized multimedia technicians for the content development (paid students are not enough).
- The courses should be evaluated by several field experts to ensure the quality of the content.

2.2.2. LILLE 1 USTL (15-16 March 2006)

Day 1:

Tools for developing online courses:
**Method:** Presentation (by David Da Costa e-learning engineer) + Discussion (with David Da Costa, Daniel poisson, Marie-Jose Barbot and Christian Ladesou)

**Advantages:**
Facilitate the process of designing and developing e-enabled materials.
Provide a high level of flexibility in developing the e-enabled material.

**Recommendation:**
All universities (individually, or through the RUFO project should buy and use these softwares after testing and piloting them).

**Passport Project**

**Aims:**
Enables students to get high school certificate to be accepted at the universities.
Provides remedial courses for the students who are already certified (high school).

**Platform:** Claroline, customized to include:
- Content Reference Database, were all contents are posted by filling an electronic form and uploaded in database to be available for all participating teachers to use.
- Pedagogical Sequencing (Learning Method), were each student will be assigned a learning materials sequence according to his/her competency.

**Partners:** 5 French universities.

**Important Points:**
- All the courses are accredited by all the participating university.
- Each teacher decides on his method of delivery.

**Method:** Presentation (by David Da Costa e-learning engineer) + Interviews (Teachers, Tutors and students) + Discussion (with David Da Costa, Daniel poisson, and Christian Ladesou).

**Recommendations:**
It might be a good idea for one of the projects to be adopted by RUFO project; however, there is need to conduct a needs and situation analysis in Palestine.
It is also of a great importance to prioritize the needs.

**Day 2:**

**E-Services International Program**

**Target Groups:** Managers and Information technologists
There are two different sets of courses from 4 fields (security, Mgmt, Marketing and Human computer interaction) targeted to each group in addition to some common course (English language) to both groups.
Problems / difficulties
• The structure of the program and the types of courses and their order.
• Administrative and policies related problems
• Universities are different in the level of experience
• Accreditation (Lebanon).

Platform: Ganesha
Partners: Lebanon, Belgium, Tunisia and France
Process: Each university has to develop a set of courses.
Concept: Constructivist approach in distance and collaborative learning

Method: Presentation+ Discussion

Important issues to consider:
• It might be a good idea that the universities together develop a certain new (old) program in cooperation with the European partners. However, there is a need to conduct a situation and/ or needs analysis first.
• Accreditation issues.
• There is a always a need to remember and take into consideration the objectives of Rufo project:
  Capacity Building
  Develop new programs or modify existing ones.
  Or… both.

2.2.3 Summary and Conclusions
Summary presentation of Lille study visit to expert from ULB who doesn’t not know these particular projects (Eric UYTTEBROUK).
Comments on the presented materials.