

*Innovation in Language Learning*  
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**Beyond Marginalized Fragmentation:**  
*Technology and Innovation in English Language*  
*Teaching in Palestinian HEIs*

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# Themes

- Updating skills and competence
- Technologies of scale
- Globalized transformations
- English language proficiency
- Rights, inclusion, equality
- Unique challenges of Palestine



# Situating the issue

## Prison

Man said:

Blessed are the birds in their cages  
For they, at least, know the limits  
Of their prisons.

**Mourid Barghouti** (b. 1944)

*Translated from the Arabic  
by Radwa Ashour.*

## السجن

قال ابنُ آدمَ:

طُوبَى للعصافير في هذا القفص  
إنها- على الأقلّ-  
تعرفُ حُدودَ سِجْنِها

مريد البرغوثي



# Challenge of emancipatory learning

- Rationality itself under siege
- Degraded levels of participatory citizenship
- Unexamined impacts of the crash of 2008 and increasing inequality
- Rising fragmentation, hate and fear
- George Monbiot: *“Out of the Wreckage”*  
*Human beings have a unique capacity for altruism, empathy and collective education*
- Inclusive education requires a parallel emancipation from the strictures and modalities of neo-liberalism



# Digital resources

- In a transformed world, technology and values intersect powerfully and symbiotically.
- Technology was to underpin a move towards more equal, open and democratic futures
- Boosters of techno-social governance and the 'end of history' were wrong
- Human values on rights, respect and recognition are maintained and enhanced through purposeful appropriation of technologies to serve transformative ends.

## *Dealing with the challenge*

- Inequitable access to language learning resources
- Impact of occupation and fragmentation
- Need to update methodologies and contents
- Need to develop strategic vision
- Improved teacher motivation
- Crisis, challenge and the impact of growing inequality

# *Crisis and Opportunity in Education*

*“School systems that have successfully ignited reforms and sustained their momentum have all relied on at least one of three events to get them started:*

- they have either taken advantage of a political or economic crisis,*
- or commissioned a high-profile report critical of the system’s performance,*
- or have appointed a new, energetic and visionary political or strategic leader.”*

*McKinsey 2010*



# Determining objectives

- Technological potential remains elusive
- Goals, methods and assessments in language learning remain traditional
- Computers are used in traditional ways - new tools to do old things
- Core components of the curriculum are unchanged





# English in Palestine

- Primary source of communication with the international world
- Most important component is the textbook and written instructional materials
- Textbook selection profoundly impacts both teacher and student learning dynamics
- Quality English language textbooks require contextualized content to respond to sensitive cultural and social variations and expectations

# Setting goals

- English language instruction that is authentic, natural, recent and relevant
- Incorporation of instructor and student perspectives
- Innovative ICT deployment in instruction and support
- Emancipatory approaches as a means to mobilize disenfranchised individuals and groups towards democratic engagement

# Methods and values

- Teaching and learning that enable critical thinking, facilitating meaningful knowledge building to indigenous populations
- Raising awareness of root causes of social marginalization, economic inequalities and political exclusion
- Setting oppressed people free from fatalistic, irrational and deterministic mind sets
- Technology demonstrates world-class capabilities can be provided and developed in educational systems



# Setting the agenda

- Overcoming the lack of both resources and expert native speakers in Palestine
- Students valuing their classes in a clearer, more effective and attractive manner in learning English.
- Utilizing modern technology in developing educational interventions to reduce complexity in English learning.
- Tools to help teachers to transfer information easily and pass suitable information to the students in easier ways.





# Project stages

- Increase creative thinking and hands-on innovative training of university students
- Make education processes simpler and more engaging.
- English language skills and competences (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) represented in technology frameworks
- Develop Palestinian skills through training on content design, technology integration in education and teaching best practices.
- New curricula providing more freedom and participation, and taught in a blended environment (face to face and online).

# Globalization, learning and Palestinian contexts

Among the key issues facing learners today is:

1. Relevance of education for future employment prospects
2. Availability of learning
3. Quality and progression routes that are unbiased and transparent
4. Enhanced access for all
5. Removal of barriers around prejudice, discrimination and exclusion
6. Addressing issues around cultural and ethnic difference and diversity
7. Flexibility to meet individual learning needs in non-traditional contexts.



# From crisis to opportunity

- A globalized world of structural inequalities impacts education also
- Differential access reflects this - as does the digital divide
- Full potential of enhanced education access via technology is not being realized
- Innovation, research and creativity are keys
- Palestinian Ministry of Education established in 1994



# Global Citizenship

- Fostering inclusion in contradictory socio-economic environment problematic
- Scale of economic disruption reflected in wars, genocide, ethnic cleansing, health issues and extraordinary movements of people either as economic migrants or refugees - now permanent and accelerating dimension of globalized life





# ICT and re-imagining access

- Contradictory and paradoxical process
- Never greater potential - side by side with increasing disparities of access
- What we think:
  - Citizens
    - Shared knowledge
    - Participative engagement
- What we have:
  - Consumers
    - Increasing exclusion
    - Significant problems with equitable access

# Inclusive futures

- Training of trainers and teachers
- Multilingualism: shared learning
- Developing skills – competence transmission
- Developing attitudes – securing motivation
- Developing buy-in – loyalty and commitment
- Review, evaluation and research
- European and Palestinian partners working together

# Conclusions

- Education at a crossroads in Palestine: from refugees to occupied people
- Impact of increasing inequality: access and resources
- Crisis as the norm: learning is a start
- Performance, standards, quality, reproducibility and added value at the heart of competence: but context equally crucial
- Disruptive narratives demand global policy and shared goals
- Fragmentation as reality
- Innovative learning demands imagination and vision

# Thank you!

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