

# ICT in Education in Palestine

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# Introduction

- In Palestine, education is one of those fields in which the ICT is employed with the hope of increasing the education quality
- During the last few years, the Israeli military closure prevented the students and employees from reaching their schools, universities, and institutions easily.
- Consequently, great attention was given to the ICT sector by the telecommunication company, the Palestinian authority, and the universities.
- ICT plays a vital role to enable the students to register their courses and to follow their classes on-line over the Internet.



# History of ICT in Palestine

- The universities, tried their best to make all fields of study available
- In 980s, Palestinian graduates from computer and communication areas were leading the computerization of the manual systems in Palestine.
- At the beginning of 1990, small size companies were created and provided Internet services to Palestinian communities
- The coming of the PNA (Palestinian National Authority) enabled the Palestinians to:
  - Regain, partially, control over the sector of telecommunication.
  - Develop the infrastructure of communication networks,
  - Establish the ministry of telecommunication and Information Technology (MoTIT).



# ICT at Schools

- In 990s, the ministry of education and higher education incorporated the course of IT in its curriculum starting from the fourth grade.
- However, the schools have faced two major problems:
  - 1. The lack of the teachers who are trained to teach such courses,
  - 2. The lack of computer labs where the students will practice on using the computer system and applications.
- Recently,
  - Most of the schools are equipped with computer labs connected to the Internet.
  - Sessions were held at the universities in order to train the teachers, and IT graduates are employed as teachers at schools.



# ICT at Universities

- In fact, the Israeli closure and restrictions on the movement of the Palestinian people led to the creation of computerized systems to serve the students.
- The development can be summarized as follow:
  - 1. Focusing on creating web pages for announcements and keeping the contact between the students and teachers.
  - 2. Computerizing the registration process allowing students to register over the Internet, get their transcripts, inquire about their status and grades, and exchange messages with their teachers from home and avoiding the agony of traveling to the universities. Examples, *Az-zajel* system at An-najah University and *Ritaj* system at Birzeit University,
  - 3. Offering on-line courses to the students during the curfew and closure.



# ICT at Universities

- The universities have enhanced their institutions by:
- Establishing the IT centers of Excellence which focus on training the teachers, students, university professors, and employees from different companies on the use of ICT technology. Such centers include:
  - the Korean-Palestinian IT center at An-najah University.
  - the Kawash IT center at Palestine Polytechnic University.
  - In addition, AL-Quds University in Jerusalem, the Arab-American University of Jenin, and other universities have established such IT centers.
  - Also, some Palestinian universities have established e-learning units and groups to serve the education process in the universities



# ICT at Universities

- An on-going project called LIT (Learning Innovative Team) consisting of professors from Alquds, Birzeit and An-najah universities is intended to:
  - Train university teachers on producing e-enabled material suitable for e-learning.
  - The project started by training a group of professors from the department of Education on the use of ICT then,
  - Each trained professor takes care of training a group of professors from different departments (IT, Engineering, Science, Art,...etc) on producing e-enabled courses enhanced with multimedia (MM) contents.
  - The production of MM content is provided by persons trained through LIT project



# Private Sector

- In 1997, the PNA has privatized the telecommunication sector and licensed it to the PaTel Company.
- PaTel built a modern telecommunication infrastructure able to provide access to all of the familiar digital technologies – mobile phones, e-mail, Instant Messaging, Text Messaging (SMS) and video hook-ups.
- PaTel has formed groups such as:
  - JAWWAL for providing mobile services,
  - Hadarah for providing internet services, and
  - Hulol for designing and developing educational and other types of software.



# Non-governmental sector

- PITA (Palestinian IT Association of Companies) which combines a total of 65 companies specialized in marketing ICT technologies, developing software systems, telecommunication, consultancies...etc.
- Another organization is PICTI (Palestinian Information and communications Technology Incubator) with its idea of incubating ideas until it makes a product from the idea and then creating a small business from the same idea.
- Interestingly, two universities, An-najah in the north and Polytechnic of Palestine in the south, are in the process of establishing two such IT Incubators.



# International Entities

- UNDP was the first to help in entering the Internet to the Palestinian universities.
- The World Bank supports ICT projects through many programs such as QIF (Quality Assurance Fund) managed by the ministry of education and higher education in order to improve the quality of education at Palestinian universities.
- Although the German GTZ institution is supporting, mainly, the water projects, yet it has partially supported projects for training employees in IT fields



# Obstacles

- The ICT sector in Palestine still faces many obstacles referred to:
- The Israeli control of the radio frequencies,
- The Israeli prevention of some ICT devices needed for updating technical infrastructure from entering Palestine,
- The prevention of the Palestinians to go directly to the International Network,
- The restrictions on movement between cities, and the fear of the investors to invest in Palestine because of the unstable situation are added to the obstacles.
- In addition, the PNA must dedicate more resources and budget to improve ICT in education.



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