

External Evaluation Report

School University Partnership for Peer Communities of Learners SUP4PCL

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Table of Content

Topic	Page
Introduction	2
I. Overview of the Project	3
II. General Findings	5
❖ Relevance	5
❖ Deliverables and Work Packages	5
❖ Outcomes and Impact	18
III. Conclusion	21

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ANSU	Ain Shams University
AU	Alexandria University
AUC	American University in Cairo
CPD:	Continuing Professional Development
EACEA	Education, Audio-visual, and Culture Executive Agency
EU	European Union
FOEs	Faculties of Education
HU	Helwan University
MEIHE	Middle East Institute for Higher Education
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MLU	Martin-Luther University
NAQAAE	National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
PCLs	Peer Communities of Learners
PD	Professional Development
PDS	Professional Development Schools
PAT	Professional Academy for Teachers
QA	Quality Assurance
STEAM	Science, Technology, Arts, Engineering and Mathematics
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics

SEN	Special Educational Needs
SUP4PCL	School University Partnership for Peer Communities of Learners (Title of this ERASMUS+ Project)
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
UL	University of Limerick
UK	United Kingdom
UON	University of Northampton
ULEIC	University of Leicester
WP	Work Package

Introduction

The assignment given to me was to assess the outcomes and impacts of the project entitled **School University Partnership for Peer Communities of Learners (SUP4PCL)** based on the indicators prepared in the logical framework.

In this respect, this report aims at assessing the outcomes and impacts achieved in respect to the wider objective, and sub-objectives of the project through the following methodology:

- (1) Reviewing the project website.
- (2) Reviewing all SUP4PCL documents.
- (3) Reviewing all the case studies.
- (4) Interviewing some of the participants

To attain these objectives, I was given full access to all relevant documents available on the contents of the project's website: <http://sup4pcl.aucegypt.edu/>. The evaluation report has derived information from the project proposal, the six case studies that were a result of the collaborative work performed by the various Peer Communities of Learners, which are an integral objective, and the result of the project. Starting from the original documentation e.g., project proposal, the Logical Framework Matrix, available documentation included reports & deliverables, internal quality control and monitoring reports for work packages, Interim Monitoring and Evaluation Report, and school monitoring visit reports, etc. Direct communication with project coordinator Prof. Malak Zaalouk was also available in order to collect and summarize the important information for reporting and evaluation findings. Communications via emails with the participant institutions were used to hear their views about the management style of the project and its general outcomes. Responses were received only from the following institutions: Helwan University (HU), Alexandria University (AU), Ain Shams University (ANSU), Martin-Luther University (MLU), and University of Northampton (UoN).

The methodology starts with the project overview, and analyses of planned and achieved deliverables according to the indicators set in the Logical Framework Matrix. The evaluation is also extended to include impacts of the project on the participating institutions as laid out in the case studies.

Accordingly, this report comprises the following parts:

- I- Overview of the Project
- II- General Findings
 - Relevance
 - Deliverables and Work Package
 - Outcomes and Impacts
- III- Conclusions

I. Overview of the project.

The project SUP4PCL was initiated, with the support of Erasmus+, according to a “Grant Agreement for an Action with Multiple Beneficiaries” signed in October 2016 between Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) and the American University in Cairo (AUC) as the project coordinator. The duration of the agreement was 36 months starting from the date of signature until October 2019. But the agreement actually started in February 2017 to end in April 2020 based on a six-month extension.

The project is designed to develop, modernize and establish partnership between schools and universities in Egypt based on the European experience. Hence, this project aims at building the capacity of Faculties of Education (FOEs) to enhance and modernize Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in the Egyptian context by learning from European experiences. Furthermore, the project aims at forming good partnerships with built-in coaching and mentorship that supports complex transformational processes, which require attention to details, as well as learning from experience. The project also aims at creating a strong partnership between 3 Egyptian faculties of education and 45 public schools to support a dual reform process at both school and university levels.

The Wider Objective

Building the capacity of FOEs to enhance and modernize CPD in the Egyptian context.

The following criteria could be used to evaluate this objective:

- Monthly CPD events held in partnership with neighbouring schools
- CPD held over the time span of programmes
- Diverse forms of CPD events held
- Technology-enhanced CPD

The Specific Objectives

- FOE develops Professional Development (PD) neighbouring schools
- FOEs produce baseline needs assessment of neighbouring schools
- EU partners to develop FOE mentors
- FOE develops mentors
- FOE develops Peer Communities of Learners (PCL)
- FOE develops Systems for assessment and quality assurance for CPD

To evaluate these objectives, the following criteria derived from the project Logical Framework Matrix were used:

- Protocols signed for the FOE/school partnership
- Fifteen baseline studies produced for 15 PD schools
- Thirty FOE mentors trained

- Seventy-five master mentors trained
- Seventy-five PCLs formed and functioning
- School units for quality assurance staffed and functioning

The project comprises five work packages (WP) as follows:

Table (1)
The Project Five Work Packages

Work Package	Activities
1- Preparation	1.1 Selection of university teams and focal persons. 1.2 Needs assessment 1.3 Initial training and coaching
2- Development	2.1 Developing training material for FOE faculty to use with schoolteachers. 2.2 Training workshops for schoolteachers and pedagogical leaders. 2.3 School visits to the neighbouring schools.
3- Quality Plan	3.1 M&E tools and visits 3.2 Mid-term review.
4- Dissemination and Exploitation	4.1 Policy dialogue with stakeholders of the project. 4.2 Conference. 4.3 Publish studies and reports. 4.4 Media briefs. 4.5 School visits.
5- Management	5.1 Management meetings 5.2 Create a project website 5.3 Adjust work plan 5.4 Creation of internal organization. 5.5 Technical reporting and document review. 5.6 Financial reporting and document review.

The Project Consortium:

- The project consortium consisted of eight institutions:
- Ain Shams University ANSU (Egypt)

- Helwan University HU (Egypt)
- Alexandria University AU (Egypt),
- University of Limerick UL, (Ireland)
- Martin Luther University (Germany),
- University of Northampton UON (UK)
- University of Leicester ULEIC (UK)
- The American University in Cairo (AUC), the Coordinator (Egypt)

II. General Findings

❖ Relevance

Teacher education in Egypt suffers from many problems that hinder collaboration and partnership between FOEs and schools. Some of these problems are due to the structural problem of the dichotomy between theory and practice in Egyptian education in general and higher education in particular.

Teaching at FOEs is mainly lecture-based with a limited space of interaction between faculty members and their student teachers. During the lectures, the main aim is knowledge transfer with the domination of faculty talk time, most probably using a one-way direction. In addition, the FOEs in Egypt are mass institutions with large numbers of students, which limit student engagement in the learning process and minimize the opportunities of hands-on training of future teachers through a practicum. Such an environment provides scarce opportunities to develop positive relations with students, as they are mostly distant from the faculty members.

The six case studies undertaken within this project indicate that FOEs and schools seem like two different worlds. When they meet there is a perception, on the schools' part, that faculty members are in their ivory towers, with high levels of cultural hierarchy and power given to FOEs over schools. Rarely does the faculty engage themselves with teachers and when they do, it takes place at FOEs for one-shot training purposes with little engagement from teachers and various levels of resistance as knowledge is always seen to exist with FOEs, not schoolteachers. The flow of knowledge, know-how, and experience are top-down from FOEs to schools and seldom vice versa.

This project comes to bridge this gap through establishing strong partnership and building peer communities of learners between 3 Egyptian faculties of education and 45 public schools to support a dual reform process at both school and university levels. Hence, this project is very thematic and closely relevant to the needs of the hosting country.

❖ Deliverables and Work Packages WP

After reviewing the project website, analysing its documents, and reviewing the six case studies, it is evident that the project has succeeded in establishing a number of innovative strategies to set the reform in motion and to create a profound educational and cultural transformation in each of the participating institutions in preparation for taking it to a larger scale.

The development of work packages has produced many deliverables in various forms such as: needs assessment tools, study and management reports, case studies, training materials, and workshops. All these aligned with the wider objective and sub-objectives of the project, as well as the proposed timeline.

WP 1 Preparation

This WP includes selection of university teams and focal persons, needs assessment, and initial coaching. This WP was led by AUC with the support of University of Northampton (UoN). This work package aims at selecting teams and focal persons to help in creating a needs assessment study for each of the participating schools with the help of the EU partners who develop the necessary tools and skills. The work package also aimed at coaching mentors both at Faculties of Education and at Schools.

All deliverables of this work package are very consistent with the proposal in respect to the following activities:

1- Selection of University teams and focal persons

The three FOEs (ANSU, AU & HU) have chosen fifteen schools to be involved in the project, where each FOE collaborated with 5 schools within their proximity and according to a pre-set criterion reaching a total of 15 schools. These schools were the core of the professional development schools (PDS) where each PDS later in the project clustered with two new schools to cascade the projects' concepts and practices, resulting in 15 PD schools per faculty.

2- Complete Needs assessment

The documents show that this activity is an operational one, where collaborative fieldwork of all the stakeholders of the project has resulted through baseline study of each school, as well as training FOEs assistant staff on qualitative and ethnographic research methodologies. Each of the three Egyptian FOEs helped schools to identify their needs based on the use of tools, methods and skills co-developed with the EU partners.

Fifteen baseline reports about the participating schools were produced, dealing with the following aspects in each school:

- a. School culture
- b. Management and leadership style
- c. Evolution of quality assurance and training unit
- d. Evolution of PCL
- e. Evolution of mentorship
- f. Evolution of school-based research.
- g. SWOT analysis

These reports are very important because they documented the activities performed in the fifteen schools since the initiation of the project, and they provided a detailed description of all activities conducted in partnership between FOEs and the schools.

An important starting point to conduct the needs assessment was the training workshops held for the FOE staff and schoolteachers on conducting qualitative assessment needs. Training workshops were held on conducting a needs assessment, building professional learning communities, coaching and mentoring, ethics of educational research, and ethnography. Several PPTs, templates, manuals, coaching cards and coaching toolkit were produced and used in these workshops. <https://sup4pcl.aucegypt.edu/needs-assessments/>

3- Perform initial coaching

Collaboration between EU and Egyptian partners was also apparent in the process of developing the necessary tools and methods for the needs assessment and coaching. The EU partners participated also in training mentors from FOEs on various aspects of CPD, school-based PD, how to develop school clusters and models of mentorship. Egyptian partners travelled to the UK to observe different models in October 2017. Three training workshops were held in the ULEIC, UoN, and UL respectively, as well as MLUN in Germany on November 2017.

These visits were of great importance to the Egyptian partners who got more up-to-date knowledge about education systems in Ireland, Britain, and Germany, the modern practices in teacher initial education and professional development, as well as mentoring and coaching strategies. Twenty-four FOE mentors were trained and became ready to train 75 school mentors because of this activity. Many PPTs were produced for and used in training, and as guiding tools for field visits to four schools in the UK. These documents deal with the following topics:

- SUP4PCL Monitoring and Evaluation
- Introduction to European education systems
- European approaches to school-led professional learning
- Briefing on school visits

In addition to the PPTs, some published academic articles, guides, and manuals were also used in the coaching sessions dealing with the characteristics and use of integrated lessons to investigate teaching and learning process. Collaborative and participatory approaches were effectively used in coaching, teacher education, communities of practice, pedagogic literacy as well as mentorship. <https://sup4pcl.aucegypt.edu/perform-coaching/>

WP 2 Development

This work package (WP) was devoted to the development of training materials, training workshops, and school visits. The lead partner was University of Northampton supported by University of Limerick and the Martin Luther University. Even though the whole WP focused on material development, it is not accurate to name it as such because it included all other concepts as well.

This WP aimed to develop various materials used throughout the training sessions and workshops. It also included school visits to create school clusters. Schools were selected provided that they are: public schools, in the neighbourhood, having a Quality Assurance unit, willing to participate, having a technological infrastructure.

The sub-activities included in the Development work package are:

2.1 Developing material

This is the core activity of this work package. The training materials produced in this activity were the outcome of the cooperative efforts exerted by both EU and Egyptian partners. A good deal of various highly well-structured training materials was developed and used by FOE faculty with schoolteachers. The materials covered many areas that contribute in building the capacity of teachers in the following topics:

- Pedagogies of teaching and learning
- Science Technology Engineering Arts and Math (STEAM) subjects
- Special Educational Needs (SEN)
- Global citizenship
- Sustainable development
- Developing skills required for researching PCLs and building them in different contexts
- Evaluation of PCL
- Reflection in pedagogy and practice
- Blended learning
- Creating and supporting educational leadership in schools
- Supporting teachers through deep change
- Developing STEAM materials

Materials were developed using both soft and hard formats online, and face-to-face training materials. <https://sup4pcl.aucegypt.edu/developing-material/>

2.2 Training workshops

FOE members presented the material developed to schoolteachers and pedagogical leaders who were trained on various models of mentorship. A workshop was conducted in the period from the 6th to the 9th of December, 2017 at Alexandria University (AU) about developing materials, and a Collective Meeting held on December 14th, 2017 at the American University in Cairo, Egypt. This meeting dealt with the results of the workshops held by the participating Egyptian universities (ANU, AU, and HU) on the concepts, indicators, and values of PCL and educational mentorship in schools focusing on: 1- Clarity of the Concepts. 2- Relevance of indicators. 3- Effectiveness of mixed methods and merger. 4- Multiple use of the tools. 5- Way forward.

In February 2018, AU, ANSU, and HU held three workshops in Egypt where FOE staff members, teachers, supervisors, and students of the participating schools were involved in an activity-based training. Staff members of the FOEs developed the training materials on the following topics:

- Sustainable Development

- Global Citizenship
- STEAM Education
- Communication in Learning Community
- Research on PCLs
- Leadership
- Supporting Teachers through Change

One of the most important outcomes of this work package is the guidelines or the manual (in Arabic) on developing integrated materials on Sustainable Development, Global Citizenship, and STEAM. This Manual deals with planning a process that is based on contemporary educational principles, such as teachers' needs, learning as a social process, collaboration, professional engagement, active learning, and reflection. It includes also the stages of the planning process of integrated lessons, model lessons and learning strategies as well as educational activities. FOEs also can use it during practicum sessions held for their student teachers.

It is praiseworthy to mention, here, that the MOE has officially recognized this manual as a core element of a series of coaching and training courses with the intention of mainstreaming them in its teacher training programmes.

On the 1st of March 2018, a Training Workshop's Wrap Up Meeting was held in AUC. The report of this meeting points out some important outcomes of the training and good practices, the most important of which are:

- In the workshop, the students from preparatory and secondary schools were active, creative and full of hope. They wanted to be part of the change and were looking forward to expressing ideas that could be taken into consideration.
- The supervisors are key factors in the process of change, and without their support and involvement, it will be more difficult for the teachers to adopt what they learn from the project. The supervisors were engaged in the workshop and asserted that they will train their colleagues and sustain the change within schools.
- Regarding the FOE, the PCL started to develop; the team was highly committed. The junior staff engaged with the seniors by sharing ideas; all ideas were encouraged within the FOE.
- The teachers had good experiences, practices and knowledge about the concepts presented, yet, they were not familiar with the terminologies. The teachers had already been practicing some of the project concepts in groups and activities such as including the global citizenship concept in their activities.
- The teachers also have high levels of enthusiasm and motivation; In addition, they are willing to commit to the project and want to be part of the change process.
- These workshops have contributed in deepening the culture of mentorship and developing the PCLs. <https://sup4pcl.aucegypt.edu/training-workshops/>

WP 3 Quality

The University of Leicester (ULEIC), supported by Ain Shams University (AU), led this WP. This work package aimed to ensure that the project was progressing as planned through the implementation of various assessment tools developed with the help of the EU

partners. These tools help measure processes and outcomes in addition to various indicators and benchmarks on an ongoing basis. Assessment tools and four M&E reports were produced.

The evidences available on the project website show that the quality of the project has been seriously dealt with by all the partners throughout all the activities of the project.

The Quality Plan of the Project laid in October 2018 was an effective mechanism for quality assurance of the project. The quality plan indicates the sub-objectives, the achievement criteria, sources of evidences, actions, starting and ending dates of each activity as well as the responsible institution for reporting on a bi-annual basis.

In this respect, a great effort was exerted in developing various templates to be used in monitoring and evaluation of different aspects of the project such as:

- Overarching Research Questions
- Needs Assessment and Ethnography
- Project Impact on Learning and practice
- Evolution of PCLs
- School Profile

Project Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) was done by different methods and tools to ensure that the project is progressing as planned through the implementation stages. PCL indicators, surveys, interviews, and ME site visits manuals were developed and applied.

Six PME site visits reports were prepared by ULEIC staff. These reports are the outcomes of 2 visits to each university as follows:

- ***Alexandria University***
On: 2-3 December 2018 and 16-17 June 2019
- ***Helwan University***
On 4 December 2018, and 17 March 2019
- ***Ain Shams University***
On 5-6 December 2018 and 11 June 2019

These reports are consistent with the project proposal and the quality plan, and provided an in-depth analysis of the progress achieved in respect to the following sub-objectives:

- Developing PCL in FOEs
- Developing PCL culture and practices in PD schools.
- Developing school mentors in PD schools.

Achievement criteria of these sub-objectives are:

- Shared values.
- Mutual trust.
- Collaborative /egalitarian culture.
- Focus on reflection.
- Policy/Practice influenced by PCL culture.

<https://sup4pcl.aucegypt.edu/templates/>

The project has undertaken an Internal Interim Monitoring and Evaluation Report presented by ULEIC at the project management meeting held in February 2018. The report was divided into five sections, representing five broad themes encompassed by project activity; each of these includes a number of more specific foci as indicated in the following table:

Table (2)
M&E Internal Interim Themes

Themes		Foci
1	Peer Communities of Learners	Developing PCLs (principles, characteristics and conditions)
		Needs Assessments
		Partnership Development
2	School Development	Leadership for change
		Coaching and Mentoring
		Reflection/Inquiry
3	Pedagogic Development	Developing materials
		Subject-specific TPD
4	Establishing PD Schools	Ethnographic case study design
		Research ethics
		Data analysis/quality assurance
5	Project-level Quality Assurance	

The report summarised the overall perceptions of participants of their *key learning* in the first year of the project across these themes, and the *main challenges/needs* going forward. The report was concluded by a QA model for sustainability after the completion of the Project.

<https://sup4pcl.aucegypt.edu/reports-erasmus/>

WP 4 Dissemination and Exploitation:

This WP dealt with the conduct of policy dialogues, the organization of a conference, the publication of studies and reports, media briefs and school meetings and visits. The lead organizations are AUC and Helwan University, supported by Alexandria University.

Evidences available show that this WP was an operational one and full of activities that helped in achieving the objectives that made school and university partnership an important principle on both policy and implementation levels in FOEs. School and University Partnership (SUP) and PCLs have been thoroughly discussed in workshops, conferences and meetings of special committees in the Supreme Council of Universities SCU. All this has led to policy recommendations incentivizing measures to encourage university faculty and teachers at school to continue the practice of holding PCLs, and also to support the partnership strategy between both institutions, and to undertake the necessary legal and structural changes for implementation. It is worthy to mention that the concepts of SUP and PCLs, the reflective and the practitioner teacher, are adopted in the new bylaws of the Egyptian FOEs.

Evidences show also that the activities of this WP reached different categories and types of stakeholders, such as:

- Policy-makers to local representatives of the Ministry of Education (MoE), NGOs,
- Members from the Professional Academy for Teachers (PAT),
- Members of the Supreme Council of Universities (SCU)
- The National Authority for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education (NAQAAE).
- School clusters.

The final dissemination conference which was expected to be held on 24-25 March 2020 was cancelled because of COVID- 19 pandemic despite a great deal of work invested in the preparation for it; concept note, agenda, invitations, certificates, dialogue with policy stakeholders, preparation with media for coverage, and logistical organization. The remaining sub-activities included in the Dissemination and Exploitation work package are:

4.1 Policy dialogue

Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) and policy briefs represented major and important achievements on the policy and decision-making level as well as the main outcome of continuing dialogue between various stakeholders during the lifetime of the project. The following memoranda and policy briefs were produced:

MOU between the AUC and the Ministry of Education and Ministry Higher Education.

- Two progress letters from the Graduate School of Education AUC to the Minister of Education and the Minister of Higher Education concerning the progress achieved in forming school clusters, building the PCLs, and providing the schools with computers and other educational devices.
 - Three memoranda of understanding have been signed between partners of the project as follows:
 1. MOU between Helwan University and Martin Luther University, on 20. 11. 2018
 2. MOU between the American University in Cairo (AUC) and the University of Northampton, on 6. 2. 2010
 3. MOU between the American University in Cairo (AUC) and University of Leicester on 22. 10. 2015
- <https://sup4pcl.aucegypt.edu/policy-briefs/>

4.2 Case Studies

The project proposal considers all the case studies as a level of triangulation that supports and assures the integrity of interpretation and emphasizes that the collection of data was done at different points in time by different research teams in similar settings. Studies represent clear results on the collaborative effort exerted by different types of PCLs both within the same culture and cross-cultural. The studies also represent evidence of the capacity building achieved towards better research skills as a result of the mentorship.

The six case studies provided enormous data about the important aspects of the project namely the processes, the impact it has had on participants and institutions, the potential for sustainability and mainstreaming as well as policy recommendations.

The case studies cover a broad range of the project sub-objectives shown below:

- Sub-Objective 1 “Develop Professional Development Schools;”
- Sub-Objective 2 “Produce baseline needs assessment of PD schools;”
- Sub-Objective 3 “EU partners to develop FOE mentors;”
- Sub-Objective 4 “FOE develops mentors;”
- Sub-Objective 5 “Develop Peer Communities of Learners at school and university levels of the main project;”
- Sub-Objective 6 “Develop materials for school-based learning;”
- Sub-Objective 7 “Develop systems of assessment and quality assurance.”

The six case studies are an output of concerted efforts exerted by all the partners as follows:

- *School-University Partnership: Process, Structure, Outcomes and Impact*. Middle East Institute for Higher Education (AUC)
- *School-University Partnership for Peer Communities of Learners (SUP4PCL) Case Study*: Helwan University and Martin Luther University
- *School-University Partnership for Peer Communities of Learners (SUP4PCL) Case Study*: Ain Shams University and University of Limerick
- *Leading Change through Peer Communities of Learners: A Case Study between Egypt and the United Kingdom*. Alexandria University and University of Northampton.
- *A Journey of Transformation: The Case Study about Alexandria University’s Partnership with Schools to Build Peer Communities of Learners*. Alexandria University
- *Case Studies of Some Schools in the Partnership Project*. *Dirasat Hala li baad al Madares al Tabe’a li Mashrou’ al Sharaka (in Arabic)*. Ain Shams and Helwan Professional Development Schools.

The Case Studies depended upon the use of qualitative ethnographic research tools, the understanding of research ethics and data analysis. The use of qualitative and ethnographic research methods has different contributions, the most important of which are:

- Provision of rich and validated data for the needs assessment and case studies.
- Introducing the qualitative research methods to the Egyptian FOEs assistant staff who are familiar with the quantitative approach research methods and tools.
- Understanding the legal issues relevant to conducting research.
- Recording success stories, good practices and impact.

There was a consensus on a research framework with set questions shaping the work of each of the case studies. The findings and conclusions of the case studies presented good evidences on the progress achieved by the project.

<https://sup4pcl.aucegypt.edu/library/>

WP 5 Management

This work package aimed to ensure that the project was well-coordinated and managed at every phase through various mechanisms such as meetings, the creation of a strong website and various other communication conduits. Internal disciplines, roles and responsibilities were clearly spelt out.

The achieved indicators of this work package are as follows:

- 5 International management meetings held with reports shared
- 40 circulars shared with guidance
- 6 local management meetings held with reports shared
- 7 partnership agreements signed
- Project guiding documents shared
- Ongoing review of technical and financial reports
- Website launched
- Intermediate report sent

It is worthy to mention that, starting from the kick-off meeting held in Cairo on 27-28 February 2017, the style of management, and the roles of partners, as well as the internal organization of the project, were discussed and agreed upon by all the partners.

5.1 The Creation of Internal Organization

The views collected from some team members via emails on the management style and the main characteristics of the internal organization of the project asserted the following:

1-The management style was consultative, participatory, empowering all partners to voice their opinions and ideas.

For example, Helwan University (HU) stated that the management style of the project was consultative and collaborative on the different levels: **on the coordinator** level through the different circulars among the different partners to discuss decisions such as the dates of management meetings, final conference procedures, PCL meetings, agreement on the templates design ...etc. Also, **on the university level** through the management style of Helwan PI or the project manager who kept on discussing every single detail with the management team and also all the project team, so the decision making was bottom/ up based on consultation among Helwan university team. **On the consortium level** through the different local management meetings that were organized by the project coordinator to follow up on the universities' progress, those local meetings were considered as PCL meetings.

Alexandria University (AU) believes that the management ethos was quite collaborative, participatory, democratic, and consultative. The management meetings, especially the local ones, were quite frequent and they had two main aims. One, to share and update information openly among project teams from all universities, and the other to discuss and agree on decisions and next steps. These meetings were also used to collectively reflect on progress and have the voice of all participants heard. This was quite effective and empowering, given the fact that each partner university had a different context and needed to approach tasks in a way that best ensured the successful accomplishment of these tasks. The project coordinator appreciated and very much welcomed this diversity. Martin Luther University saw the management was very consultative and empowering very much to put more efforts into the project.

In addition, the University of Northampton believes that the management style of the project was completely consultative, collaborative, participatory, democratic and empowering throughout and at every stage. They asserted that they were consulted on every point throughout.

2-The participants tried to respect the work plan and timelines of the project to a great extent.

Helwan University (HU) attributed the delay in some tasks to unintentional circumstances as the schools' security clearance, examination times, routine and bureaucracy which caused the delay in signing our MoU with MLU, Also, *Alexandria* university (AU) had a bit of late start with the schools, due to some bureaucratic issues with Education Department in Alexandria.

The University of Northampton firmly believed that everyone had high regard and respect for the work plan and timelines of the project and tried hard to ensure that these were maintained and kept to. However, as always, events sometimes get in the way that sometimes made it difficult. Events such as researcher illness and the Covid-19 crisis has led to some slippage of timelines. This is no reflection of the participants' commitment to the project, but rather a consequence of challenges with workload and external events.

3-There is a good deal of satisfaction about the team spirit during the journey of the project.

Alexandria University (AU) emphasized that the way the project was structured and run helped in supporting the formation and effectiveness of the team spirit. Giving voice to all partners, valuing differences, and building a stronger sense of trust, dominant attitudes during the project journey. Whereas Helwan University (HU) believes that this kind of team spirit has resulted in a transformation in their culture of cooperation, empowering others, sharing and exchanging ideas. The regular meetings among the different project partners were an arena to exchange ideas, contextual and cultural information and to have social and friendly relationships.

The University of Northampton asserted that the team spirit has been one that has empowered and affirmed all members. Everyone has worked very hard to ensure the project's success and I feel very honoured to be part of this team.

4- The effective flow of information using different modes of communication between the partners.

Helwan University (HU) stated that the coordinator used to ensure the effective flow of information and communication with all partners. The coordinator used different tools and events, such as Skype meetings, video conferencing, telephone, email circulars, International management meetings, local management meetings and monitoring visits for the schools and universities to disseminate the project info and achievements, in addition to follow-up the communication among partners and between the FoE staff and PDSs. Martin Luther University (MLU) stated that frequent management meetings ensured sharing information and keeping a structured flow of information. All documents and meetings' outcomes were also circulated among all project partners. The website was also used to archive and share information. Informal channels, e.g. phone calls, were also used when further clarification or confirmation was needed.

The University of Northampton (UoN) believes that the coordinator was very effective in ensuring that there was an efficient and smooth flow of information with all members. Communication with all partners was very effective and they all worked well together.

5-There is a good deal of satisfaction about the general outcomes of the project.

Helwan University (HU) believes that the project idea was challenging and it enabled the team to overcome the obstacles they faced on different levels, the policy-makers, the educational administrations, the schools, and on the university levels. The MoU signed between the two ministries (Moe and MoHE) which helped to facilitate the PCL activities in PDSs with the support of the coordinator. The

challenge was in attracting and motivating the teachers to participate in PCL meetings due to their heavy schedule and great school burdens, but the EU experience, EU school visits, PCL materials and the team spirit of HU staff helped in motivating the school teachers to develop PCLs, research papers and to document their meetings. From HU our point of view, the project outcomes exceeded expectations. The participation of representatives from the educational administrations and directorate in school PCL meetings, also the participation of students in research meetings as well as researchers was an unexpected outcome. Also, the use of technology in enhancing PCL activities motivated the staff to achieve more than what is expected. Another example of an unexpected outcome of the project at HU, is the participation of different faculties at the university level in the project. The MoU signed by HU and MLU provides the FOEs staff with joint scholarships and mobility for Ph.D. candidates with MLU. The Faculty of Medicine also, is currently organizing online seminars with MLU to discuss how to face COVID-19.

Whereas Alexandria University believes that, this project has been a breakthrough in the culture of schools and universities. Establishing professional learning communities, based on collegiality and collaboration and introducing a partnership between schools and universities are all new to the dominant culture of competitiveness and work in isolation. Introducing a model of school-based improvement that can work in a hierarchical system is another example of the innovative nature of this project.

<https://sup4pcl.aucegypt.edu/circulars/>

5.2 Meetings

There were two types of meetings, the international management meetings and the local meetings. Four international management meetings were held as scheduled. They dealt with general technical issues related to both EU and EG partners in addition to management of the project activities and timeline.

These meetings contributed in achieving the outcomes of the project in respect to the following aspects:

- Progress achieved in the work packages
- Case studies framework and production
- Needs assessment and M&E school visits templates
- Visits programmes
- Material development (Vision, topics, Mode of delivery, Division of Labour) STEM, Global citizenship and sustainability, Learning 4 all, active blended learning
- Case studies timelines
- Logical Frameworks (sub-objectives, work packages, indicators).

As for the local management meetings, four were held as scheduled. They contributed to the capacity building of the Egyptian partners at various stages of the project, such as provide FOEs members with relevant literature and extended workshops that articulated major concepts in the projects. Examples of these included ethnographical studies, qualitative methodologies, mentorship and coaching, and peer communities of learners. In some cases, the management team at AUC developed exemplary material on STEAM education, education for sustainable development (ESD) and citizenship. These materials were later used by the FOEs in workshops each in their institution to develop similar material for the project at large. Workshops on qualitative methodologies and data analysis were also conducted at FOEs to support their case studies and reporting.

In addition to these, an extraordinary one-day meeting held on 27 August 2018, in Alexandria (Egypt) to prepare an action plan to rectify the weaknesses reported in the ERASMUS+ headquarters assessment report dated 14th June 2018. These weaknesses were:

- 1- School visit reports and baseline reports are of poor quality and do not follow a common structure and template. While some replies include valuable information, others do not provide any information to be usable in the context of the project. The reports need to be redone.
- 2- Online presence is absent
- 3- The quality report needs improvement
- 4- The dissemination plan needs to be redone (although it was not mandatory)

During the course of the project, there was a good deal of improvement occurred in these areas.

5.3 Reporting

All types of reports issued in this project are available on the website on their respective work packages. They are well organized in such a way that they give detailed and clear information. Some reports are equipped with illustrations, PPTs, and YouTube video links that events and activities performed by the partners. The wrap-up and meetings final reports are repositories of all what has been done during the various stages of the project, the future challenges, and the perspectives of sustainability. The reports also, represent an arena of dialogue between the partners whose voices with their different views are present in such a way that reflects the democratic, transparent and collaborative management of the project.

<https://sup4pcl.aucegypt.edu/management-reports/>

<https://sup4pcl.aucegypt.edu/legal-documents-and-guidelines/>

5.4 Website

The project website aimed to consolidate the partners' professional relationships and continue the dialogue. Reports and material could be uploaded on the website for further use and dissemination.

The SUP 4 PCL website: <http://sup4pcl.aucegypt.edu/>. provides detailed information to all the partners, stakeholders, FOEs members, and schoolteachers from school clusters

of the project. In the beginning, there was some delay in launching the project website as referred to with “Online absence” in the ERASMUS+ headquarters assessment reports aforementioned. Yet, the project website was professionally created and published with a clear policy of website pages, the privacy, the registration process, the roles, the groups and group discussions, the posts and the size of attachments.

The SUP4PCL website is a user-friendly website. It offers information about the project, the partners, and the five work packages with their relevant documents. It provides a library that includes: the case studies, platforms of the participating FOEs, links to the Egyptian Knowledge Bank, up-to-date articles and literature relevant to the main project themes. It appears that the website is daily updated and contains the important information about the project inputs and outcomes. The website has now migrated to AUC for the sustainability of the project.

Table (3)

Summary of findings in accordance to the logical framework matrix

Wider Objectives	Indicators of Progress	Indicators Achieved
Build the capacity of FOEs to enhance and modernize CPD in the Egyptian context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monthly CPD events held in partnership neighbouring schools • CPD held over the time span of the Programme • Diverse forms of CPD events held Technology-enhanced CPD	Mentorship and coaching relationship between 59 university faculty and 162 school teachers Three technology labs for the PCLs with the schools were established at each of the Egyptian universities. Barriers to the use of technology gradually disappearing.
Specific Objectives	Indicators of Progress	Indicators Achieved
• 1. FOE develops PD neighbouring schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each partner FOE institution adopts five neighbouring schools as PD schools • Protocols signed for the 	More than 100 peer communities of learners at schools and universities created

Wider Objectives	Indicators of Progress	Indicators Achieved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •FOEs produce baseline needs assessment of neighbouring schools •3. EU partners to develop FOE mentors •FOE develops mentors •4. FOE develops PCL 5. FOE develops Systems for assessment and quality assurance for CPD 	<p>FOE/school partnership</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Fifteen baseline studies produced for 15 PD schools •Thirty FOE mentors trained •Seventy-five master mentors trained •Seventy-five PCLs formed and functioning <p>School units for quality assurance staffed and functioning</p>	<p>MOU signed with MOE & MOHE & MEIHE • Several agreement letters signed at directorate level</p> <p>The three FOEs (ANSU, AU &HU) have chosen fifteen schools to be involved in the project, where each FOE collaborated with 5 schools within their proximity</p> <p>Fifteen baselines reports produced about the participating schools</p> <p>Twenty-four FOE mentors were trained and became ready to train 75 school mentors because of this activity</p>

❖ Outcomes and Impact

The six case studies laid out a comprehensive picture on how the participants were greatly affected and developed by the project activities, and provided research-based findings and conclusions on the outcomes and impact of the project through its journey in respect to following themes:

In respect to building PCLs:

- 1- The project contributed to raising teachers' awareness about PCLs by sharing principles and values, building trusting relationships, developing collaboration and enhancing willingness in participating in PCLs
- 2- Findings of the survey and the focus group discussion indicate that collaboration is one of the essential characteristics contributing to the establishment of successful PCLs. This 'collaboration-friendly culture' provides teachers with multiple opportunities to learn together and share beliefs and practices freely.
- 3- Students' learning has also been affected positively due to the effectiveness of their teachers' teaching practices which were influenced by participation in PCLs. These gains were obtained through sharing their experiences and applying new teaching strategies that they were trained on and have enhanced their students' learning.
- 4- The notion of action research which consolidates the themes of collaboration, trust, knowledge sharing and commitment among teachers from the fifteen schools. This consequently led to the development of the teachers' collective efficacy and their positive attitudes towards PCLs.
- 5- PCLs team members became able to move from one problem and solution to another while providing support and encouragement. They could practice being mentors to their colleagues within a safe and comfortable environment that they could then draw on when mentoring teachers in schools.
- 6- PCL team members considered *Learning as a Social Process*.
- 7- The use of technology and social media helped in the exchange of activities. Communication, among the team members inside the local PCL, is mostly made by cell-phones, text messages, WhatsApp or phone calls. The use of the Edmodo platform helps to facilitate the sharing of materials among PCL members through the uploading of photos, videos and the support of PCL members using comments and feedback regarding the activities and learning materials.
- 8- According to the content analysis of the reports, WebQuests, and MoU, it is evident that the partnership assures the sustainability of the PCLs through sharing the link of the HU blog which includes all activities of FoE learning communities (See <https://helwanpcl.blogspot.com/>). Also, the links of WebQuests for STEAM, citizenship, Erasmus projects and research proposal writing to exchange the experiences among teachers and school mentors.

See: <https://sup4pcl.aucegypt.edu/library/>

In respect to building partnerships between schools and university, (SUP):

1- Blurring of boundaries between higher education and k-12 personnel

Instances, where the boundaries were being clearly blurred between both types of institutions, is when faculty of education mentors admitted to learning a great deal more about the context of the school they were responsible for. It had also become a modality between professors and students at university. Meanwhile, technology was now being used as a conduit to dialogue and share all their practices and news. Preferred channels were WhatsApp, Edmodo and WebQuest.

2- Renewed sense of professional identity on both the university and school levels

3- School administrators involving others in decision making

Despite the usually very hierarchical and centralized system in schools with authoritarian styles of leadership, some of this was gradually giving way, in some situations, to different forms of management.

4- Training unit involved and its capacity is built

From the inception, the design of the SUP4PCL project made sure that the training units established by the Ministry of Education in each school become involved in the enactment of the partnership and its aims

5- Engaging students in the partnership and allowing students to teach their peers

Most teachers and faculty members attested to the fact that they engaged their students in the partnership activities. Many faculty members had created PCLs with their own students. In schools, some teachers involved students in the development of improvement plans.

6- Deep impacts and levels of transformation

At the surface level, all teachers in the schools had undergone changes as they had introduced new themes in their school curricula, such as sustainable development, global citizenship education, and STEAM. Moreover, they had all received mentorship on the use of new technologies in the classroom and had in fact enacted and used those new learnings starting from the use of PowerPoint all the way to moviemakers, flipbook and other more sophisticated technologies. They had also learned to connect and maintain their PCL activities through technologies such as the use of Edmodo and WebQuest.

On a more profound level of change and transformation clearly, both faculty and teachers had acquired new pedagogies. During a focus group discussion, teachers explained how they had moved away from traditional teaching and had become a lot more student-centered,

The team adopting new habits of mind, new values and beliefs manifested changes at a deeper level. Also significant was the development of collaboration and reflection all of which allowed for innovations.

On another level, faculty and teachers had deeply internalized collaborative behaviour

If anything stands out as a very deep impact of the project, it would be the ability and willingness of faculty and teachers to practice reflection. Many of

the teachers reflect during lesson planning, during teaching, and after teaching is over. Quite a few write their reflections regularly. Some even use reflective diaries

Clearly reflection, collaboration and the general climate created by the project resulted in innovations in classrooms and schools at large. Many new ideas were being implemented such as the complaint box, the school journal, and a coupon system to incentivize students, who were well-disciplined.

The AUC case study provides also a future vision of two levels to enhance the school university partnership:

1- At the university level:

- Promotion of faculty should be based on higher weightings for community service and mentorship of schoolteachers. This would respond to the need for extrinsic motivation amongst some of the university faculty.
- Contrary to current practices, collaborative research should be given higher points in assessing the dossier for promotion and tenure. Currently, collaborative research is not high in the promotion evaluation system in national universities.
- More weight needs to be placed for action research and research leading to school improvement.
- The dossier for promotion should contain evidence of participation in peer communities of learners as a way of making the time and effort spent worthwhile.
- Practitioners should be invited and encouraged to lecture at university. This seemed to work as a strong incentive amongst the teachers in the SUP4PCL partnership and it seemed to greatly motivate them to sustain the partnership and do better in school.
- Universities should be able to offer outstanding practitioners honorary diplomas.
- Faculties and schools of education going through reforms should invite school practitioners to be part of the process.
- Mentorship should constitute part of the offerings by faculties of education. Mentorship has proven to work quite well for the school teachers joining the SUP4PCL project and was recognized as a good strategy for lifelong learning and for improving teaching and learning in schools, but also in university.
- Faculty members engaged in school university partnerships should be getting a reduced teaching load. All faculty members in the project complained about overload and the scarcity of time available to support such initiatives.
- Faculties of education should establish technology labs for teacher professional development. The labs had apparently worked quite well for mentoring teachers and were also very instrumental for expanding the initiative through school clustering

2- At the school level

- The Ministry of Education should have a continuous professional development (CPD) policy that reinforces the formation of peer communities of learners (PCLs). Some were suggesting that this needed to be mandatory.

- The training and quality assurance units in each school should oversee and support the formation of PCLs. The project had greatly strengthened and empowered the quality assurance and training units and given them a new role that needs to be maintained. Their activities were made that much more effective through the existence of Peer Communities of Learners.
- Schools should make time and space available for the activation of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) and the meetings of the PCLs. This was not only the views of the authors of this case study and the coordination leadership of the project, International good practices but was also the prevailing views of almost all the teachers interviewed. They needed the time and space to meet as very often this was a great challenge and the benefit they got out of meeting regularly and learning collaboratively were clearly significant.
- University should support and strengthen school mentorship and the training units. All teachers in the project were clearly very grateful for the opportunity they were given to connect with the university, be mentored by faculty, learn new methods, ideas and practices.

III. Sustainability

This project has good potential for sustainability. This potential is based upon some concrete achievements upon which one could build on to enhance SUP and establish PCLs as well as developing initial and continuing training of teachers in Egypt. Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs), progress letters and policy briefs represented these major and important achievements on policy and decision-making. They were as follows:

- 1- MOU between the AUC and the Ministry of Education and Ministry Higher Education.
- 2- Two progress letters from the Graduate School of Education AUC to the Minister of Education and the Minister of Higher Education concerning the progress achieved in forming school clusters, building the PCLs, and providing the schools with computers and other educational devices.
- 3- Three memoranda of understanding have been signed between partners of the project as follows:
4. MOU between Helwan University and Martin Luther University, on 20. 11. 2018
5. MOU between the American University in Cairo (AUC) and the University of Northampton, on 06. 02. 2010
6. MOU between the American University in Cairo (AUC) and University of Leicester on 22. 10. 2015

1- Conclusion

From the detailed analysis of the project documents mentioned above, it can be concluded that the project has succeeded in attaining its objectives stated in the proposal in the defined timelines, except in the beginning and end. The project team of both Egyptian and EU partners played a prominent role in running the project and tackling the obstacles that have arisen during the implementation of the project. The coordinator and staff involved in the project management were highly efficient and devoted to attain the project objectives.

The project has been undertaken in a moment during which the education system in Egypt is witnessing a comprehensive reform movement to improve its quality and rectify the structural weaknesses that impede its contribution to the development process in Egypt. The new vision for education reform is based on the integration of knowledge, innovation, and critical thinking that needs a reflective and practitioner teacher. This made this project very relevant to the needs of the Ministry of Education in Egypt, on the one hand, and facilitated the process of building the partnership between the schools and FOEs, on the other hand.

One of the most important achievements of this project is the movement from traditional teacher training to coaching and mentorship. The PCLs replaced the large classrooms and auditoriums, and the mentors from FOEs and teachers from the participant schools were engaged in coaching and mentorship processes, where reflection, collaboration, dialogue and action research are practiced in such a climate where learning and communication technologies and platforms were used.

The STEAM approach was also used in coaching and mentoring teachers in developing and use of integrated lessons, which combine different themes from different subject matter in each lesson. There are some concerns about the adoption of this approach in Egyptian schools. These concerns are regarding the initial education of teachers in FOEs where teachers are trained according to separate disciplines in a completely theoretical way. The integrated approach and PCLs should be used as a teaching and learning strategies in FOEs in Egypt.

Communication, among the team members inside the local PCL, is mostly made by cell-phones, text messages, WhatsApp or phone calls. The use of the Edmodo platform helps to facilitate the sharing of materials among PCL members through the uploading of photos, videos and the support of PCL members using comments and feedback regarding the activities and learning materials.

All this makes partnership between schools and universities a necessity and an important principle on both policy and implementation levels. The praiseworthy achievement of this project, is its success in issuing resolutions and recommendations from the Supreme Council of Universities (SCU) to incentivize measures to encourage university faculty and teachers at school to continue the practice of holding PCLs, and also to support the partnership strategy between both institutions, as well as undertaking the necessary legal and structural changes for implementation.

The efforts exerted by the project coordinator and the Egyptian team from the three FOEs have succeeded in making the concepts of SUP and PCLs, the reflective as well as

practitioner teacher integral parts and conditions to be adopted in the new bylaws of the Egyptian FOEs

The project has succeeded in reaching different categories and types of stakeholders from different institutions involved in building school university partners. This gives the project a momentum that facilitated the implementation of school clusters, undertaking case studies, baseline reports and holding for coaching and mentorship.

The use of qualitative and ethnographic research methods has different contributions, the most important of which are:

- Provision of rich and validated data for the needs assessment and case studies.
- The Egyptian FOEs assistant staff had the opportunity to practice qualitative research methods and tools in different settings.
- Understanding the ethical issues relevant to conducting research.
- Recording stories of success, good practices and impact.