

2017

**Report on SUP4PCL/ ERASMUS+
Third Local Management Meeting
12th of September 2017 at Moataz
Al-Alfi, The American University in
Cairo, Egypt**

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School and University Partnership for Peer Communities of learners

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations:

Partners Acronyms	
AUC	American University in Cairo
ANSU	Ain Shams University
AU	Alexandria University
HU	Helwan University
ULEIC	University of Leicester
UON	University of Northampton
UL	University of Limerick
MLU	Martin-Luther University
Other acronyms and abbreviations	
SUP4PCL	School University Partnership for Peer Communities of Learners (Title of this ERASMUS+ Project)
MEIHE	Middle East Institute for Higher Education
PAT	The Professional Academy for Teachers
ARAS	Action Research in All Schools
FOE	Faculties of Education
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
AR	Action Research
WP	Work package
PCL	Peer Communities of Learners
PD	Professional Development
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
SEN	Special Education Needs
CBL	Community Based Learning

SUP4PCL/ERASMUS+ Third Local Management Meeting Report

September 12th, 2017

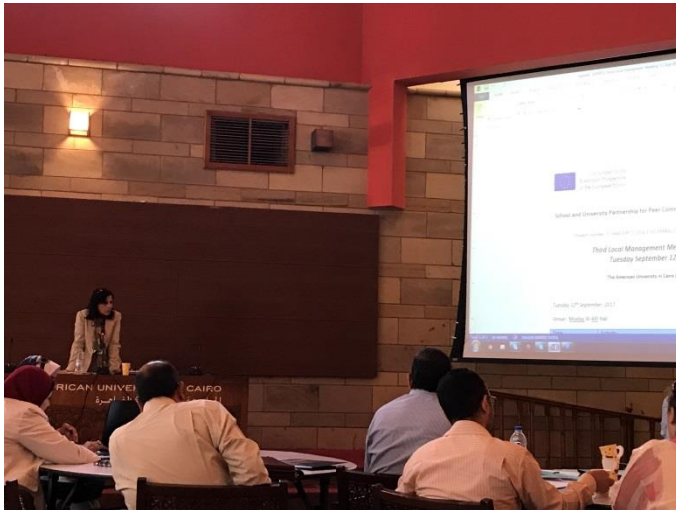
The American University in Cairo

Egypt

Tuesday 12th September, 2017

Introduction and Welcome note:

Prof. Malak Zaalouk, Founding Director, Middle East Institute for Higher Education (MEIHE), AUC:



Prof. Zaalouk greeted the participants from the three Egyptian partner institutions (ANSU, AU, HU). She expressed her pleasure in having the whole teams attending this meeting and clarified that this meeting is important to set the tone for the needs assessment studies, reflect on the coming EU visit and project activities for the current year. An overview of the meeting agenda was given by Prof. Zaalouk. The first session consisted of presentations by the three Egyptian partners (ANSU, AU and HU) reporting on their progress concerning the selection of teams, formulation and division of labor as well as the needs assessment. The second and the third sessions covered the coming visit programs to the EU partners as part of WP 1.3 (Perform coaching) and a refresher presentation by Prof. Zaalouk concerning the connection between the project, effective schools and students' achievement and the way forward.

I. Session One: Progress Reporting- Presentations by the three EG FOEs (ANSU, AU and HU)

Dr. Rasha Kamal, AinShams University, ANSU



Dr. Kamal started her presentation explaining that this project is a challenging one for ANSU team since it is the first time they get involved in such a project. Yet, the teams started to develop passion for it. Dr. Kamal clarified that after the second management meeting took place in Leicester, the project management team at ANSU organized a two-day meeting on the 5th and 6th July, 2017 for their whole team. During this two-day meeting, they explained, in detail, the project activities and work packages and the criteria of school selection and school profiles. In addition, they explained the concept of PCL, the characteristics of effective PCLs, as well as its performance indicators. The management team at ANSU also led a session on PD schools and conducting needs assessment. Furthermore, the two-day meeting included sessions on ethnographic studies and ethical issues. Finally, they updated the team on the second management meeting, as well as the EU partners' visit in April 2017 as the last session of the meeting agenda.

Concerning the team members and division of labor, a new member joined the ANSU project's team. The new member was Dr. Mahmoud Higab, the head of the training department at ANSU. The project leads at ANSU started to focus on creating effective working communities and on team building that is based on trust and respect. They also introduced the whole teams to the culture of the project as well as its way of management. In addition to the management team, the teams were divided in groups based on their specializations and expertise. Dr. Kamal clarified that the teams started to grasp the culture in this project; they started to share experiences and discuss issues with each other. In other words, the team spirit started to get stronger.

Developing the material was another aspect that Dr. Kamal discussed. ANSU team discussed the topics of the material that needs to be developed in the project. The teams suggested the following topics to be covered: STEM/STEAM, active learning, blended learning, teacher as researcher, special needs and global citizenship.

One example, one of the groups discussed and identified the specifications and the characteristics of the STEM/STEM material. The characteristics mentioned were:

- Learner based (Innovative creativity approach)
- Interactive technology approach
- flexible adapted material
- Individual differences oriented
- Mixed and integrated teaching strategies
- Examples (concepts based on STEM), applications
- Evaluation according to creativity levels

Dr. Kamal elaborated on the progress that ANSU has made. ANSU team had extensive discussions concerning the 'school profile template'. The template was provided by AUC in an earlier meeting, as a helping tool to start the preliminary needs assessment. Yet, ANSU team worked on the template and added some additional points to it.

The points added to the original template were:

- The number of projects of professional development
- The number of disabled and special students must be known also the type of disability.
- The number of teachers granted master or doctoral degree in education.
- The number of teachers who graduated from the school of education.
- The existence of rewarding systems.
- The technological tools needed for communication
- The hierarchy of decision making in the school.
- Issues related to time of sessions inside the school.
- Issues related to the degree of job satisfaction of teacher.
- Relation between parents and teachers and school management.

Another point mentioned by Dr. Kamal was the new ideas that emerged concerning the PD schools. A new more specific questionnaire was developed for the school profile in addition to the previous one provided by AUC. The questionnaire included questions such as the school's

address, vision and mission, its quality assurance accreditation status, the school working hours (mornings and evenings), their involvement in the community, number of students in classes ...etc.

The schools formerly selected were also changed by ANSU based on Prof. Zaalouk's suggestion. The schools that were finally included in this project, were originally part of the "Action Research for all Schools project "(ARAS). The suggestion made was to establish a link between the researchers involved in ARAS and the schools that they were in to conduct the needs assessment. Five ARAS schools were selected as a starting point, since they are already introduced to the culture of the project and the concept of 'action research'. This resulted in thirty-five teachers being selected. The teachers created teams inside their schools and trained their colleagues on Action Research earlier. Accordingly, those teachers will be part of the school teams in this current SUP4PCL Erasmus⁺ project. ANSU faculty team will be responsible to oversee the school teams.

Dr. Kamal then moved to the coming steps:

- ANSU started coordinating with their governorate and created a protocol of cooperation, but are waiting for the final signed MOU between MEIHE, MOE and MOHE to be able to visit the selected schools. (Protocol of cooperation between SUP4PCL and MOE to start visiting the schools).
- The draft questionnaire is ready and in the review stage by experts
- The team is ready for the EU training visit

The last point mentioned by Dr. Kamal is that ANSU are planning to include their students who are doing their practicum to be part of their team.

After the presentation, Prof. El-Kharashi suggested to create a WhatsApp group to exchange ideas and expertise. Then he asked the presenter about how to get the best use of the teamwork based on their specialization to serve the project objectives. Dr. Kamal clarified that ANSU have an ambitious plan for the material, to have all possible topics included, yet the material will be used in schools based on the need of each school.

Prof. El-Kharashi also suggested that introducing the teams to the cultural dimension and raising awareness of the concepts we focus on in this project is vital. He believes that it is important to raise the awareness in schools first then the teams will be ready to go to schools since the concepts the project focuses on are absent in the field of education.

Dr. Shehab from HU also raised another question. She explained that ANSU has already selected the topics of the material, yet Dr. Shehab believed that we need to adopt a bottom-up approach, conduct needs assessment then based on that specify the material that we need to develop.

Regarding the WhatsApp group suggestion, Dr. Ahmad from HU suggested that having a forum might be good for the mentioned purpose to have a more organized place for discussions and exchanging knowledge. Dr. Morsy supported the idea and suggested that Dr. Ahmed will be responsible for this mission. Prof. Zaalouk also clarified that Dr. Ahmad and Dr. Morsy will work together on creating and organizing a blog as a preliminary step until the website is developed for the project and then the blog would migrate to the website. The blog will not be open for public and it can include both Arabic and English languages while the website will focus more on English as it is directed to the outer world. Prof. Zaalouk also clarified that the blog will be a very good start till the website is created. Afterwards the blog will be transferred to a website as one of the project requirements. There will be one website that goes under the AUC umbrella but not separate websites for each partner.

Commenting on ANSU presentation, Prof. Zaalouk thanked Dr. Kamal and the team for their wonderful presentation and praised the efforts done and the spirit of the teamwork among ANSU team.

Concerning the themes of the material, Prof. Zaalouk stressed that the themes listed are the ones originally targeted in the SUP4PCL project. Hence, we need to focus on them and adapt them to serve the schools' needs.

Prof. Zaalouk gave an example of Global citizenship. She clarified that the Global citizenship means that each citizen need to have some important values such as human rights, equality and sustainable development. Empathy is another important characteristic to have. Citizens need to gain these values, work for them and take action. They need to be proactive. Therefore, these values are important ones to be included and taught in schools.

The way to explore where such concepts stand in schools, as Prof. Zaalouk explained, is to open conversations with teachers and touch the intangible aspects such as teachers' beliefs, values and suggestions. Accordingly, we can focus on the missing aspects. Prof. Zaalouk illustrated that we might create five PCLs in one school and this is acceptable as long as the needs for the five PCLs are different. She stressed that we should not include the traditional topics in the menu of the material such as grammar or religion as examples. Prof. Zaalouk elaborated by giving examples of the material that we might consider such as having a guiding framework for creating and developing PCLs, the material can be a mix of online and hard copies, in addition we can use part of what exists in the EU universities, adapt it to our context and needs and

translate it into Arabic. The material will be provided to The Professional Academy for Teachers (PAT) as it will be distributed to schools through them, similar to the ARAS package.

At the end of the discussion, Prof. Zaalouk thanked ANSU team for their great efforts and expressed her pleasure that ANSU has developed the profile template. She asked ANSU to send the modified version of the profile to the AUC team. She also added that focusing on the special needs in education is very important. The idea of the coordination with other projects is another aspect praised by Prof. Zaalouk. Lastly, starting with ARAS schools is another important step taken by ANSU based on the project strategy of linking ARAS to the SUP4PCL project since these schools are already introduced to the concept of AR and are familiar as well with the methodology used.

Prof. Zaalouk also clarified that the equipment will arrive in three weeks, hence universities and schools will be able to start working online.

Dr. Saeed ALShamy, Alexandria University, AU



Dr. ALShamy started his presentation by the profiles of the AU team selected. The management team started with six people, then the whole team expanded and two other teams were formed, the 'lead research team' and the 'assistant research team'.

The 'communication and logistics management team' is the core one and is responsible for:

- The technical support: Facilitating Work packages implementation & Monitoring & Evaluation & Reporting
- The Communication & Logistics Management
- Leading Research

Dr. AlShamy then explained that the AU team decided to start with the schools based on their context. He said that when they had conversations with some schools in earlier workshops, they found out that the teachers actually conduct action research but without naming it as such. Similarly, AU team might find out that some schools have informal unplanned PCLs. Therefore, the team agreed to work with schools based on the dynamics that take place on the ground.

Dr. AlShamy briefed the participants with the activities done at AU. The following are the aspects achieved by AU so far:

- Selection of University Teams & focal persons (criteria)
- Selection of 5 partner schools (criteria).
- Gain access to partner schools (protocol).
- Needs Assessment Tools has been developed (To be piloted).
- Code of Ethics has been Developed.
- Weekly Meetings
- Orientation Day for AU Team.
- Logistics: Travel Plans.

He clarified that the selection of schools was done. Yet, inspired by ANSU, AU would consider starting with ARAS schools too. Three or four schools have already earlier experience through the ARAS project. In addition, some of the schools selected are far from AU, accordingly, these might change to closer ones as well. AU has decided to allocate a team of four members in each two schools.

The needs assessment was another aspect that Dr. AlShamy elaborated on. The topics AU plans to focus on are: innovation, PD, leadership, and school-based reform.

Needs assessment tools have been developed, particularly the interviews and focus groups. AU will start piloting the tools once they have access to schools. This will be followed by revising and modifying the tools based on the piloting results then starting the process of collecting data.

Concerning the codes of ethics, Dr. AlShamy mentioned that three team members (Dr. ElHawwary, Dr. ElKomy, and Dr. AlShamy) are working on the guidelines. A draft guideline is developed, but still needs revision and proofreading.

Weekly meetings are conducted for the core team. In addition, an orientation day for the whole AU team took place early in September 2017. The agenda of this orientation included overview of the project, its aims, workpackages and activities, partnership with schools, details on the needs assessment study and team allocation in schools, the visits programs and the coming steps.

The forthcoming tasks was the last point Dr. AlShamy talked about. He clarified that before the coming EU visit in October (Perform coaching WP 1.3), AU should have visited the schools one or two times as a starting point for building a relationship with schools and completing the needs assessment.

Lastly, Dr. AlShamy suggested exchanging the tools developed among the three Egyptian partners to get the best use of the tools.

Prof. Zaalouk thanked the AU team and made a comment on the difference between school profile, ethnography and school-based reform.

The school profile is about gathering basic quick information about the schools through proxy indicators such as number of boys, girls, number of special needs students, teachers' qualifications...etc., while ethnography is more in-depth study that researches aspects such as leadership, beliefs ...etc.

Prof. Zaalouk added that the school-based reform is not a theme. The topics need to be around the themes originally targeted in the project (e.g. STEM, SEN, CBL, active learning...etc.). For example, we can focus on how to help schools create PCLs.

In sum, Prof. Zaalouk clarified that the entry point to schools would be through Action Research training and orientations with the delivery of the kits to schools. The first output on the schools being studied would be a school profile; this would be followed by an ethnography of the school; which would also give rise to a third layer being the needs assessment and finally the fourth output would be the sum total of all three components with a narrative of the changes occurring exemplified by the action undertaken. All of this would ultimately constitute the case study; the final output.

The process would strengthen the trust, while building PCLs and supporting the building of materials. All the university teams would therefore be engaged in Action Research with the school teams and ultimately these networks would develop PCLs

Dr. Lobna Shehab and Dr. Hanan Morsy, Helwan University, HU



Dr. Morsy started her presentation with some achieved aspects. HU team members have been selected and protocols with schools are signed. The team is only waiting for the official MOU to be finalized.

After the second International management meeting that took place in Leicester, HU team conducted several internal meetings. The meetings focused on the activities of the first year of the project to help the whole team understand the project requirements better. The goals of the meetings were:

- To get feedback concerning the selection of the team and division of responsibilities.
- Preparation and designing of needs assessment tools.
- Reviewing the tools and getting feedback.
- Communicating with schools to apply the needs assessment.
- To provide the whole team with more details concerning the main goal of the project through comprehensive presentations and to divide the tasks for the needs assessment stage.

The outcomes of the meetings were:

- Designing necessary tools for the needs assessment. In addition to the school profile template provided by AUC, HU has developed a questionnaire.

- Setting a committee responsible for statistical analysis of results.
- Developing the draft of the needs assessment tools to be tested by experts.
- Reviewing the needs assessment tools and providing feedback.
- Update the protocol between HU and Cairo educational directorate
- Beginning the procedures of communicating with Cairo educational directorate to take the security approval for applying research tools

Highlighting the progress on the needs assessment activity, the presenters explained what has been accomplished. The following were the points mentioned:

- The selection of the team responsible for the needs assessment stage in schools.
- Setting criteria for the selection of the needs assessment team:
 - 1- Desire to develop and build relationships between FOE and schools.
 - 2- Enthusiasm for change.
 - 3- Young researchers and lecturers.
 - 4- Has good relations with teachers in schools.
 - 5- Lives within the geographical area of the school for easy access to be able to monitor the needs assessment process.

The main topics that the tools focus on:

- Training needs.
- Training Methods.
- Peer communities management.
- Resources and equipment.
- Professional activities & students learning.

The team also designed an electronic tool for data entry.

Concerning the school visits, Dr. Morsy briefed the participants about their profiles and explained that the HU team started visiting schools. Some of the teams were attending the meeting and each gave few comments about their first impressions about the schools they visited. For example, the team taking charge of Zamalek Girls School has already created the school profile, they also conducted meetings with teachers and explained what the project is about. In addition, they started the process of ice breaking and trust building. Dr. Dina one of the team members shared her reflection on their visit to the school and shared some highlights from what the teachers said. The teachers were not encouraged at the beginning since the training programs are always imposed on them. However, after they knew that HU team will take into consideration teachers' needs and build the material and the PD programs based on that, they showed more acceptance.

Another example is Helwan Primary school. Dr. Khaled, one of the HU team members and in charge for this school, quoted that school teachers showed their passion to improve. The teachers said that it is the first time we are asked: what are the areas you want to be trained on?

Dr. Morsy added that this meeting was published on the school website news which reflects the school's enthusiasm, as well as their willingness to use the technology.

The floor then was given to Dr. Shehab. Dr. Shehab explained where the HU team stands concerning the data entry process. The HU team gathered data for 30 teachers and added them on excel sheets. This data includes many details such as the preferred times for training, their feel of citizenship, etc.



A summary of the needs assessment stage outcomes was given as follows:

- The collaboration between HU team members resulted in beginning the development of learning communities especially during the application of the needs assessment tools.
- The management team assigned a coordinator for each school and each coordinator selected his/her own team.
- HU communicated with Cairo Educational Directorate to assign a coordinator between the university and the schools to facilitate the project activities.
- HU set a system for monitoring and documenting all activities done inside the selected schools through asking the needs assessment teams to prepare reports about each day, taking photos and joining Facebook page to disseminate the school's activities.
- 93 questionnaires are completed, and the data entry process is done.
- Organizing open interviews with those responsible for the quality assurance unit in the school
- Some teachers showed interest in their answers and explained the need to put an effective framework for their needs. On the other hand, others thought that training is not important, especially about their relations with their colleagues
- Most of the training activities were done in the multimedia lab.
- Most teachers in schools were very happy and enthusiastic to collaborate with HU.
- The teachers showed interest in exchanging their experiences with their colleagues and university staff in HU.
- Most schools announced HU school visits on their website and Facebook pages.
- Teachers' needs have been identified and analyzed by the training unit of the school.
- Main training themes are:
 - 1-Curricula
 - 2-Learning and Teaching skills
 - 3- Using modern educational technology
 - 4- Self- improvement.

6- Smart board

7- Leadership skills.

- Training is better to be conducted during vacations (preferably Midyear vacation).
- The school team was very cooperative and has a positive attitude towards training and its impact on teaching.
- Activating roles of training and evaluation units at school.

The last point that was mentioned in this presentation is that the HU team is also considering creating a website between the university and the schools, but this is not part of the project fund so it needs to be self-funded.

Prof. Zaalouk congratulated HU team for their great efforts and work and asked them to present their work on the needs assessment during the coming UK visit in October, 2017.

One important comment Prof. Zaalouk made on HU presentation concerning creating a database for teachers. Prof. Zaalouk clarified that this initiative is a very important one since there is no database for teachers in Egypt.

Concerning the reports and the new or modified tools and templates, Prof. Zaalouk stressed on the importance of sending these tools as well as the detailed reports to the AUC team regularly. The reports and tools used are important tools for the documentation, report writing and M&E.

Prof. El-Kharashi made an excellent intervention concerning the domain of the needs assessment as was discussed earlier during the EU partners visit to the Egyptian partners last April 2017. He raised a question whether in this project we need to focus on the teacher only or include all other stakeholders as well (such as leadership, parents ...etc.) to cover the different institutional needs. He added that based on the presentations, our focus is on teachers.

Prof. Zaalouk thanked Prof. EL-Kharashi for his important intervention and clarified that we will focus on the teachers needs in the first place.

Dr. Ahmad from HU also highlighted an interesting point. He believed that when meeting the teachers in schools, it is important to start with the “why” before explaining the “what” and the “How” questions. The teachers need to understand why a certain aspect is important. Prof.

Zaalouk strongly agreed with this point clarifying that it is vital to show respect to teachers and their intellectual capacity instead of dealing with them as machines.

II. Session Two: EU visits Program (WP 1.3)

Prof. Malak Zaalouk, the American University in Cairo, AUC

The second session was a quick briefing on the EU coming visits programs taking place in October and November 2017 and having the participants' feedback on them.

Concerning the UK visit, the participants believed that the themes in the agenda are good ones. The only point mentioned, was that although they understood some of the constraints regarding attending mentorship sessions they were wondering if ULEIC and UON could record some of those sessions and or have the teams observe through an opaque screen. The participants are keen to learn as much as possible on mentorship.

Concerning the program in Ireland, the participants did not have additional comments to add other than the points Prof. Zaalouk already had. These were having more variety in the topics, less focus on physical education and more hands-on sessions.

Concerning the visit to MLU, the participants appreciated the items included in the program; they however were wondering if the school visits and exposure to observing teaching, mentoring and professional development in action could be increased. They also would appreciate if the program would include more on STEM initiatives and project based learning.

III. Session Three: The way Foreword

Prof. Zaalouk stressed on few points concerning the coming period:

- Since the MOU was signed the same day of the meeting and copies of the MOU were distributed to all participants, the Egyptian partner universities are entitled officially to start visiting schools. Based on that, Prof. Zaalouk stressed on the importance of doing more work on needs assessment before the coming visit to EU.
- The participants need to get letters from their universities stating that their salaries are not reflected on their bank accounts. These letters should be submitted along with the other required documents when applying for the visas in the upcoming interviews in the embassies.
- It will be important that the participants have journals with them during the EU visits and write their personal reflections and diaries there. This is important and part of the learning experience for all the participants.

Prof. Zaalouk then moved to the final part of the meeting. The final part was a refresher presentation on the connection between the project, the effective schools and students' achievements.



Prof. Zaalouk clarified that it is important to analyze and improve the culture of schools as institutions. The main elements of effective schools according to Prof. Zaalouk are:

- Strong mature leadership
- Having high expectations from students.
- Having secure and organized environment that encourages learning.

- Giving attention to skills.
- Continuous follow up on students

Prof. Zaalouk elaborated that according to Levine and Lezotte, there are other important elements for effective schools. An important one is having a culture that is productive and that depends on the strong social and professional relationships between practitioners. Institutions do not progress only by policies and regulations but rather by having good communication and a friendly cooperative atmosphere among teachers.

According to Sammons, Hillmore and Martimore , the continuous encouragement ,the psychological support and the participation in the decision making process and in putting the vision and the goals are all important features in the relationships and the dominant culture. In addition, one of the most important practices that influence students' achievement and learning is creating social communities of teachers who share same values and performance criteria.

The successful effective schools are the ones whose teachers are highly motivated and goal oriented. The successful effective schools are also the ones that are characterized by strong cultural connection. In other words, as explained by Prof. Zaalouk, the dominant culture that consists of certain beliefs is highly influential on their behaviors. Eventhough the teachers' assumptions and beliefs are not clear factors but they are considered the most influential.

At the end of the meeting Prof. Zaalouk thanked the participants for their motivation, commitment and for the great team work they are showing.

