

**British Council with the Association for Learning Technology (ALT) organised a Videoconferencing Forum on Leadership in e-Learning for policy makers and practitioners in Gaza, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Manchester at our British Council Centres on Monday 5 September 2005.**

Our aim was to bring together Palestinian and UK educationalists who have been involved in leading change in e-learning in their organisations to:

- share experiences in strategic leadership in e-learning and how they have made differences in their own institutions;
- provide an opportunity to explore issues for the future development of e-learning in the Palestinian education.

The VC Forum was a pre-conference workshop at the Association for Learning Technology (ALT)'s annual conference *ALT-C 2005: exploring the frontiers of e-learning - borders, outposts and migration* <http://www.alt.ac.uk/altc2005/>. ALT is the leading UK body bringing together practitioners, researchers, and policy makers in learning technology.

The UK panel consisted of: Dr. John Cook, ALT Chair/London Metropolitan University; Prof. Paul Bacsich, Visiting Prof, Middlesex University and Prof. John Slater, Institute of Educational Technology, Open University.

The forum included case studies from 3 Palestinian institutions: Dr Osama Mimi, Birzeit University; Dr Raed Al-Qadi and Dr Luai Malhis, An Najah University; and Dr Imad Hodali, Al Quds Open University



### **Background**

In our education programme we have been exploring the role of e-learning in the HE sector. We began with a pilot project in 2004 linking the Islamic University Gaza (IUG) and Middlesex University who provided work-based professional development using a range of distance learning techniques (on-line learning environments, webcams and videoconferencing). This offered a solution to the challenges IUG staff face travelling to the university and provided staff with practical experience in e-learning. The project won the *Times Higher Education Supplement* e-tutor of the year award. Now, through a series of VC forums we aim to connect Palestinian policy makers and practitioners with their UK counterparts to share experiences and explore issues of concern around e-learning.

### **Issues emerging in the Forum**

Need for pedagogy, models, evaluation and assessment methodologies.

Experience has developed through participating in international projects rather than looking for models to adopt. Role of national initiatives, Palestinian Education Initiative (recently launched by the Ministry of Education).

Bottom-up initiatives require co-ordination.

Limits of open source solutions, some Universities find some components useful but not necessarily a complete solution.

Forum was a rare opportunity to share experience between WB, Gaza and EJ as there is no association of practitioners. ALT would be willing to provide advice in setting up an association.

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