INTRODUCTION

This paper traces the emergence and historical trajectory of Palestinian universities, noting the dramatic increase in student numbers over the past couple of decades. It underscores the fact that Palestinian universities have, since their creation, been concerned with regional and societal development. This feature of Palestinian higher education is then considered as part of global developments and the general move towards the third mission, assisted by the growth in information and communication technologies (ICT) and the internet. Finally, it looks at examples of regional engagement as indicated in the benchmarking exercise of the Lifelong Learning in Palestine project, which is a European Union Tempus initiative involving four Palestinian universities, two Palestinian non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and four European universities (see the Lifelong Learning in Palestine website at http://lllp.iugaza.edu.ps/en/).

GROWTH AND HISTORICAL CONTEXT

For Palestinians during the British mandate, pursuing a university education meant travelling to Beirut or Cairo. After 1948, the focus shifted to Cairo and various other universities in the Arab world. Egypt was far more in tune with Arab political aspirations. However, two-year, teacher training, technical and liberal arts colleges were established with the involvement of the United Nations Relief and Work Agency. Amidst these developments, Palestinians students were quickly developing their own sense of where they wanted to be in higher education. A Palestinian nationalist consciousness emerged. In 1967, Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza, controlling movement in and out of the whole region. Efforts since 1967 have been almost exclusively on Palestine creating its own system of higher education.

Baramki (2010) writes that, in the early days, 'we were building a better future for our people … We needed a university to develop Palestine, train professionals, as a laboratory for ideas and create a leadership'. Since then, many universities have been established, the most recent being the University of Gaza, which was set up as a private institution. In 1948, there were around 60 higher education students, whereas today there are around 214,000 young men and women on courses in 13 universities and 50 other higher education institutions (Ministry of Higher Education, 2011). Many of the new students come from refugee camps, small villages and lower income families (Paz, 2000). Under conditions of a belligerent occupation, this increase represents quite an achievement.

FROM OSLO TO THE PRESENT

Over the period of the different Oslo agreements and under the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), the number of Palestinian students entering higher education has increased by a factor of five. This increase is without historical comparison. There has also been an incredible success in reducing illiteracy (PNA, 2008). With a single overarching legal framework being set up for all institutions, whether governmental, public, private, profit-making or non-profit-making, education came to be seen as a right (Soto, 2001). Breadth was provided in the system as well as depth, broadening the societal impact right across different socioeconomic groups. Each institution became a university, or a university college, or a polytechnic or community college (European Commission Tempus, 2012). At the same time, NGO activity increased, and in cities such as Ramallah and Jerusalem, NGOs became a strong presence. NGOs are now important partners for many universities in providing both informal and formal training and education in Palestine, which often complicates collaboration.

Higher education in Palestine operates with considerable autonomy (academic, financial and administrative) and self-management, each institution taking responsibility for admissions and staff employment policies. Autonomy no doubt contributes to the institution's self-worth (see Clark, 1971). The universities also control their own procedures for student assessments and confer their own degree awards. Boards of trustees participate extensively in governance, contributing a great deal to the development of strategy and missions. Universities also apply modern management principles and quality assurance standards. Outside these formal controls, universities still remain accountable to the local community by being very much an integral part of regional culture. Quality is an ongoing issue, and in 2002, the Accreditation and Quality Commission was set up, with the overarching responsibility for accrediting, assessing and evaluating programmes, subjects and institutions. This Commission is now fully functional across all institutions.

The age of students in traditional institutions is between 18 and 24 years, and over 25 in the open university system. It is a notable feature of the Palestinian system that women constitute around 55% of the student population. Yet while student numbers have increased, core funding has remained at the same level, with student fees contributing to only 60–70% of the operational budget – something in excess of 50% of students cannot pay their tuition fees. Constant financial restraints produce incredible pressures that expose almost all institutions to the risk of closure. Strikes because of the non-payment of full staff salaries are not unusual. Al-Quds University suffered particular difficulties in 2013, and financial insecurity often burdens regional involvement.

The mission statements of most institutions focus on teaching, research and community engagement. The budget targets teaching and staff salaries first, however, and these swallow up most of the budget resources. This means that only a minimum percentage of the budget is allocated to research, especially research in the community, with levels of expenditure often depending on various other sponsors. A very welcome development recently has been that the Ministry of Higher Education has specifically allocated a small budget for such research. Yet the main areas of cooperation between higher education institutions and the local community (enterprises, public institutions and NGOs) are in students' internship training, curriculum development and consultation services.

GLOBAL TRENDS AND BENCHMARKING REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

Palestinian institutions follow international trends carefully. University centres observe the global knowledge economy, and international advisory agencies can be found working alongside many Palestinian universities. While teaching university courses in institutions such as the Islamic University of Gaza (IUG) and Birzeit observe these trends, Jongbloed (2008) comments that Palestinian institutions are now increasingly called upon to deliver education and research relevant to the global knowledge society. This is a focus for Palestine. It is also the focus of the *Arab Knowledge Report 2010/11* (Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Foundation and UNDP, 2011) which introduced its findings with the following:

> Undoubtedly, the Arab reality is thorny and problematic; this is our reality, and we know it well in detail. We have no way out but to work through this reality, with awareness and determination to overcome obstacles, and with recognition that human's worthiness is not measured by the success to adapt with reality, whatever it may be, neither by skills in managing the statuesque, but rather by the ability to develop this reality and change it for the better through serious, persistent and well thought hard work that is driven by a spirit of optimism, selflessness, and devotion. By this, change will happen and development be achieved. (page A)

It is agreed that development calls for more university involvement in the political arena through collaborations with non-profit-making organizations, social movements and a variety of different training and educational foundations (OECD, 1997). It is also agreed that the universities could play more of a role in creating social cohesion. But universities are not outside the broader political situation that isolates one area of the West Bank from the other and maintains an almost complete closure of Gaza, with nothing moving in or out of the area without prior Israeli approval. This has made the work of the Lifelong Learning in Palestine project all the more difficult. Problems have been simply with the movement of people when Europeans travel in and Palestinian colleagues travel out to different gatherings.

Knowledge exchange works through people. With strict limitations on travel, research collaborations have been patchy. Nonetheless, most Palestinian universities are embracing their 'third' mission with enthusiasm. Universities have also taken to benchmarking involvement, which was an early task of the Lifelong Learning in Palestine project. In the benchmarking exercise, considerable skills were developed and quite a lot of discussion was initiated from the results. Discussion was not limited to campus staff. Regional involvement was encouraged in the earliest of activities, and some informal learning centres took part in the discussions. Reflection on mission statements followed – prioritizing work with local companies, NGOs and civil society organizations. The benchmarking tool assessed methods of gauging community needs and informing ongoing strategies for future regional involvement.

Benchmarking asked about quality assurance procedures for community activities. Views were sought on the amount of continuing education in the region each year and also on the level of provision, culminating in university awards. Knowledge of employment and economic trends was central to the benchmarking. Details of work with enterprise, government agencies, voluntary organizations and various other organizations were solicited. Information moved around the whole question of societal development. The results did not vary a great deal, reflecting years of occupation and closure policies, which in effect meant that millions of Palestinians now connect through social media and have long conversations via mobile phones.

TECHNOLOGY

Palestinian economic, political and cultural institutional life connects to the universities, as with all other institutions, through the company Jawwal. Junka-Aikio (2012) claims that there has over the past decade been a boom in mobile phone use right across Palestine. Jawwal was licensed by the Palestinian Authority before 1999 but could not get Israel to release the needed communication frequencies. The company (a subsidiary of the Palestinian Telecommunication Group) now stands as one of the most vibrant areas of Palestinian economic life. Controversially, Junko-Aiko has argued that the impact on Palestinian subjectivities has been negative, and that Palestinians have become more and more cornered in their own individuality, so much so that old discourses about traditional identities do not endure in the way they might have done in the past.

If Junka-Aikio's thesis holds, the consequences for Palestinian higher education will not be insignificant. The telecommunications system is one of many infrastructural supports for higher education that came with the Oslo Interim Agreements, which gave the Palestinian Authority the right to build and operate a separate and independent communications system. Reliance now on this technology is shown by internet use. The demand for technological goods and services throughout Palestine is shown in Table IV.3.1.1.

TABLE IV.3.1.1
Percentage of household IT goods and services (Palestine Central Bureau of Statistics, 2011)

Services	2004	2011
Computer	26.4%	50.9%
Internet	9.2%	30.4%
Satellite dish	74.4%	93.9%
Fixed phone line	40.8%	44.0%
Mobile phone	72.8%	95.0%

Business process outsourcing/information technology outsourcing and telecommunications technology have flourished in recent years, as the figures in Table IV.3.1.1. demonstrate. Advertising shows that Google, Cisco and various other ICT names are all active on the West Bank.

The internet is accessed for Facebook by 37%, information by 85.7%, entertainment by 79.3% and communication by 69.1% of the population. Studying and work are reasons for 49.3% and 18.2%, respectively, showing that mobile phone and internet use is on the increase, regardless of the specific purpose or use. Yet the University of Birzeit official website says that the purpose and mission of

each of its centres is improving the daily realities of life in this region. Birzeit is seen by all the residents in the region to be a societal resource aiming to develop the most valuable natural resource of the area, which is the Palestinian people.

HUMAN AND SOCIAL CAPITAL DEVELOPED LOCALLY

One example of the way in which Palestinian universities are moving into regional engagement can be given with the example of the Jerusalem Community Action Center (CAC). In the Old City, the CAC functions as a Palestinian community rights-based centre, established under the umbrella of Al-Quds University (Community Action Center, 2013). The centre engages marginalized groups and empowers them to fully participate in their community. This is accomplished through individual social and legal advocacy, community organization and participation in decision-making bodies. Empowering the disadvantaged to access their social and economic rights and entitlements through democratic means is further seen as the way to develop civil society in East Jerusalem and foster equality and democracy.

Another example might be given by the Centre for Architecture Heritage, or IWAN (IWAN, 2013), which represents the community restoration of valuable architecture. In 2000, the Center was established as a small unit in the IUG's Faculty of Engineering. Its work was crucial after the 2008/2009 war on Gaza, which destroyed many of Gaza's valuable buildings. IWAN set about archiving and documenting all the damage and loss. The Center then began restoration of the Ibn Othman Mosque in Shojaeya District, the Omari Mosque in Jabalya town, the famous Hato and Ashi houses in Darag district, and numerous other houses, baths and places of different religious significance. In the process, new three-dimensional techniques of computer imaging were developed and long forgotten architectural detail was recorded for future renovation workshops and training related to the rehabilitation of old buildings, architectural conservation and restoration, redecoration and the revival of ancient ornaments, paintings, mosaics and glass drawings.

After Operation Cast Lead, IWAN organized around 12 exhibitions of its work.

The IUG has also established a unit of Business and Technology Incubators (BTI) on a community outreach basis, which aims to provide business services to young entrepreneurs who have developed their ideas beyond the early stage. The BTI provides product and marketing advice for projects with an ICT component, and works with more established regional/international investors to create funding possibilities for new companies. One of BTI's core objectives is to develop the management curriculum for new training programmes encouraging the talent to lead new Palestinian companies that can compete successfully in an international environment. The BTI has numerous collaborations with names such as Genius Soft, media eye, Tasawaq Palestine and GoCall Palestine. Through this kind of collaborative focus, the Materials and Soil Laboratories were established in 1995 for material, concrete, soil and asphalt testing. The Laboratories have established them as the best equipped material testing laboratories and offer their services to all companies across the Gaza region.

CONCLUSION

Schuetze (2010) reminds us that there are three sides to community engagement: knowledge and technology transfer, continuing education and more community-based research. An example of knowledge and technology transfer in Palestine comes in 'on the ground' networks of informal learning that need much more development. The Lifelong Learning in Palestine projects works to develop a clear national framework in which these exchanges can take place. Research collaborations, faculty consultation services, student internships, university continuing education programmes, conferences and seminars, and the exchange between the university's different professional associations are all an ongoing focus. Schuetze is keen on continuing education, described as 'recurrent professional education, public seminars and lectures, and short-term not-for-credit courses' (pp. 22–4). Palestinian universities function under conditions of a

belligerent occupation but nonetheless show a remarkable degree of determination for the third mission, a fast-developing area of innovation and change. The role of the universities in moving societal change and building Palestine remains clear, but there a huge need for more international input from global networks of universities.

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Inside View IV.3.2
Knowledge, engagement and higher education in Qatar

Uday Rosario

Qatar is a small country in the Arabian Gulf region that has experienced rapid growth and development over the past 20 years. Both state policy and the philanthropy of the ruling family have enhanced the spread of higher education. The national university is Qatar University (QU), founded in 1973 to produce skilled and educated Qataris for the expanding economy and social service sectors. More recently, the Qatar Foundation, lead by Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Bint Nasser, created Education City, which is composed of the satellite campuses of leading US, French and British universities. Together, these two sets of institutions are leading the way towards engaged higher education in the country.

Each institution has a unique focus that has undoubtedly been shaped by its origins. QU shows a strong commitment to partnership with key sectors in Qatari society – industry, business, government, academia and civil society. The campuses that make up Education City take the approach of developing individual students towards becoming active and engaged citizens. Education City's international make-up has encouraged a number of programmes for international service learning.

QATAR UNIVERSITY

QU, the primary institution of higher education in Qatar, joins other academic institutions in aligning its programmes, courses, research and other initiatives with objectives of the Qatar National Vision 2030, Qatar National Development Strategy, National Health Strategy and National Research Strategy. Underlying these objectives is a commitment to meet the needs of the fast-developing economy and address changes in the society's expectations, and to seek solutions to everyday challenges such as those related to education, energy, environment, health and cultural identity, to name but a few.

As the flagship national university, QU is a leading partner with government, academia, industry, business and civil society to contribute to the country's development and progress. This is apparent in the objectives listed in its Strategic Plan, its stated mission and vision, and its development of academic programmes and research initiatives.

Along with research, QU sees community service as a priority issue and adopts a holistic approach to building programmes. These can be found in the areas of national capacity-building, continuing education and professional development, volunteerism, health awareness and alumni involvement, along with other initiatives that impact positively on the community.

The Qatarization process is a critical objective by which QU serves the community through national capacity-building and matching graduates to the labour market. QU also has strong leadership programmes to maximize the capacity of Qatari faculty members as teachers, scholars and potential leaders for the university and society.

Through its Continuing Education Office, College of Pharmacy's Continuing Pharmacy Professional Development programme, National Center for Educator Development (NCED) and College of Law, QU's training and professional development activities provide members of the professional sectors in government and private-sector organizations access to up-to-date information and techniques related to their particular professions. One of QU's most recent initiatives is piloting a new human resources qualification, developed exclusively for Qatar, which is the first such training course reflecting and meeting the specific needs of the Gulf region.

Professional development and lifelong learning for teachers, educators and researchers are an important area for QU. Through its NCED programmes and annual education reform conference, the College of Education provides support to people working in the education profession – that is, teachers, school leaders, administrators, support personnel and administrative staff – to update their skills and knowledge to keep pace with the rapidly changing developments in methods, techniques and tools in the field of education.

The College of Law's continuing education initiatives are designed to engage the legal profession in Qatar in professional development activities to upgrade their skills and competencies in new and existing areas of law. An intensive three-module training programme in September–October 2012 – Advanced Intensive Skills Courses for New Lawyers and Legal Professionals in Qatar – oriented members of law firms and govern-