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WALADU

Development and Structuring of BA Courses in Archaeology and Ancient History

External Evaluation

WP3 (New Teaching Units and Internship Creation) and WP4 (New BA Teaching Units and the Creation of an International Network)

By Barbara Lilliu, Stefania Chirizzi

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Disclaimer

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

I. Evaluation Purpose and Scope

Funded by the European Union through Erasmus+ (Capacity Building Key Action 2), WALADU is a three-year project (2017-2019) coordinated by the University of Bologna. The project is a partnership between the Universities of Ludwig Maximilian in Munich and Koç in Istanbul, in addition to the Universities of Baghdad, Kufa and Qadisiyah in Iraq.

WALADU's general aim is to contribute to the improvement of education in archaeological and historical subjects in Iraq and to increase the opportunities for students in the labor market in Iraq to bring the formal education of these subjects in line with current EU standards and trends. Specific objectives focus on promoting:

- 1. The modernization of Bachelor of Arts (BA) courses in archaeology and ancient history in Iraqi universities;
- 2. The reinforced capacity to design teaching units, and the cultivation of innovative knowledge by local teachers and staff;
- 3. International collaboration between EU and Iraqi higher educational institutions to support academic exchanges at all institutional levels, by framing the collaborations within an internationally regulated and recognized network.

This external evaluation study seeks to provide relevant information concerning the WALADU project experience in relation to the Work Package 3&4 (WP3&4) and key progress made. In detail, the primary purpose of this evaluation is to determine the extent to which key objectives and targets related to WP3&4 were achieved. The evaluation has employed the 5 OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, as well as early effects and cross cutting issues. More specifically, the evaluation aims to achieve the objectives listed below, respectively for accountability and learning purposes.

The accountability component of the evaluation aims to:

- Highlight WP3&4 successes and challenges throughout implementation;
- Assess the project's early effects by identifying seeds for long-term and sustainable change.

The learning component of the evaluation aims to:

- Identify key lessons learnt from the implementation of WP3&4;
- Identify the level of need and appropriateness for future work.

The final evaluation consisted of three phases:

1. The **inception/desk phase** (April/May 2019) focused on defining in detail the overall structure of the evaluation study, specifically the evaluation's scope, expectations and requirements.

- 2. The **consultation phase** (June/July 2019) involved mainly primary data collection from beneficiaries and collection of inputs from all relevant stakeholders involved in the project experience.
- 3. The **synthesis phase** (August/September 2019) entailed the consolidation of information collected throughout the previous phases to formulate and share learning outcomes.

The methodology used for the analysis includes:

- Basic thematic coding and frequency counts to identify key themes emerged across data and their incidence;
- Triangulations;
- Identification of cause-effects statements, both explicit and implicit.

As a result of this process, the final report was drafted and finalized after incorporating the inputs of the coordinating team.

II. Findings

Through the implementation of Work Package 3&4, the project directly contributed to improving the quality of teaching in the universities of Baghdad, Kufa and Qadisiyah. The project's thematic areas and linked activities are highly **relevant**, particularly given the Iraqi context and the overall needs of Iraqi Universities to improve their quality of teaching and research methodology in the archeological field.

The project in general, and WP3&4 specifically, were effectively built around contextually relevant needs. The project has been generating important achievements that have the potential to be impactful in the long-term at multiple levels of Iraqi universities and within Iraq's society. The project adequately takes into consideration the complexities linked to the Iraqi context and the gaps related to outdated infrastructure and tools within the Iraqi universities. WP3&4 acknowledges universities' lack of innovative teaching modalities and practical follow-ups and is therefore **relevant** to the needs of the target group it addresses.

The evaluation results have found that the WP3&4 has been **effective** in developing several activities, from summer school to the cascade training, and the development of the new teaching units and internship program to contribute to the achievement of higher quality education standards in Iraq. All data gathered indicated that the project has been able to address effectively the lack of opportunities of Iraqi students to experience short-term study periods abroad and the availability of modern syllabi supported by up to date technology and publications.

This evaluation aimed to analyze the extent to which WP3&4 activities' results were impactful at different levels, though the evaluation could only assess **early effects** due to the limited scope of this study. The new teaching units have increased the knowledge of the

students in the subject matter, therefore an initial impact at the individual level is already evident and laying the foundation for a more general change in the teaching methodologies of the Iraqi universities. It is too early to determine whether the project is working towards long lasting change; however, the data collected so far is promising and may indicate potential towards broader systematic change within the universities.

Sustainability is often simplistically defined as the continuation of existing activities. However, this evaluation considers a more holistic view of "sustainability" based on the wealth of knowledge and possibilities the WALADU project is creating for its target groups, being the universities' prosperity (new labs, techs and libraries, as well as a more interesting teaching offerings, and international connections and linkages) or professors and students individual journeys (more competencies, knowledge and opportunities). In this sense, WALADU is working well towards its overall sustainability enhancing individual capacities and fostering an enabling environment for Iraqi universities to uphold international teaching standards and cooperation at the highest level.

The project has put in place transparent and **efficient** working modalities and can rely on a robust M&E methodology that ensures a smooth implementation

III. Conclusions & Recommendations

The WALADU project has developed through a two-year journey within a context that presents significant challenges and complexities at the social, economic and political levels. The project has worked towards laying down the basis to achieve long-lasting results, with a view to supporting the local capacities of higher education institutions. The purpose is to promote change towards the modernization of education policies and to provide students with an education that is more aligned with the needs of the labour market and society. The project has thus far proved its capacity to include specific solicitations and address demands driven by its partners, specifically Iraqi counterparts, in a participatory and effective fashion.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1) To develop a shared methodology to collect feedback from the students:

The idea of collecting regular feedback from students on professors' performance and/or other organizational aspects is still in its early stages in the Iraqi universities. This was evidenced by the lack of a coherent and shared methodology to assess the use of WaLib and WaLab, as well as a lack of direct feedback collection at the end of the new teaching units. Engaging the administrative and teaching staff on a discussion toward the identification of a shared methodology to collect feedback from the students is an interesting area of improvement for the WALADU project. The introduction of such a methodology will help to measure the effectiveness, and possibly the impact, of the new syllabi and ultimately strengthening universities' transparency and accountability.

2) Internship program and linkages with employers:

One of the main issues raised from the Iraqi universities towards the establishment of the internship program was that there is no guaranteed for future employability, in addition to the lack of funds for the internship program's implementation. The data indicated the need to continue improving the practical aspects of the courses. Moreover, more focus should be put towards a general change of perception on the usefulness of the internship program as a voluntary program that does not require large funds to be set up and coordinated on a regular basis. However, linkages with potential employers could be sought in an increasingly systematic way to tailor the internship program to market demands in combination with income generation activities, which can constitute an additional component for future initiatives.

3) Opportunities for greater international coordination:

Through WaLink, the project has already set the basis for long term and larger international coordination. It would be important to continue working to improve the platform for better coordination and fundraising opportunities, as well as to provide the Iraqi counterparts with skills related to project proposals and grants writing.

4) Replication and expansion of the summer school experience:

The summer school experience was very successful, and it would be advisable to expand and replicate it for future initiatives. It would be important provide further opportunities for Iraqi students to study abroad but it would also be interesting for foreign students in archeology to go to Iraq for a practical experience in their archeological sites, if safety requirements are met.

5) Advocacy actions at the national and international levels:

In line with previous evaluation recommendations also this report suggests a more structured advocacy action geared towards promoting a dialogue with ministries and authorities to advocate at the national level for innovative teaching methodologies (including internships) that are in line with international standards to be included in the official curriculum.

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

I. The Project

WALADU is a three-year project (2017-2019) funded by the European Union in the context of the Erasmus+ (Capacity Building Key Action 2). Coordinated by the University of Bologna, the WALADU project is a partnership between the Universities of Ludwig Maximilian in Munich and Koç in Istanbul, in addition to the Universities of Baghdad, Kufa and Qadisiyah in Iraq. The three international universities are each responsible for the implementation of specific activities, according to their expertise, and the University of Bologna guarantees overall supervision and adherence to the EU guidelines, standards and requirements.

WALADU's general aim is to contribute to the improvement of education in archaeological and historical subjects in Iraq and to increase the opportunities for students in the labor market in Iraq to bring the formal education of these subjects in line with current EU trends and standards. Specific objectives focus on promoting:

- 4. The modernization of Bachelor of Arts (BA) courses in archaeology and ancient history in Iraqi universities;
- 5. The reinforced capacity to design teaching units, and the cultivation of innovative knowledge by local teachers and staff;
- 6. International collaborations between the EU and Iraqi higher education institutions to support academic exchanges at all institutional levels, by framing the collaborations within an internationally regulated and recognized network.

The WALADU project involves a broad spectrum of activities that are encompassed in eight work packages (WPs) interrelated to each other as can be seen from the diagram below developed by the implementing organizations. The first four WPs represent the key components of the action, which combine research and practical activities, including training, validation and dissemination. Specifically, WP1 focused on preparatory work aiming to understand the academic needs of the Iraqi Universities, identify relevant stakeholders and define an efficient training system methodology (TSM) for the Iraqi staff, as well as criteria for the integration of the new BA courses (WP1). The second work package, based on the findings of the first one, focused on developing the academic profile of teaching staff (both senior and junior professors), in addition to the administrative technical competence on quality assurance. The third work package aimed to develop and deliver the new teaching unit supported by a testing phase, during a Summer School at the Koç university, and practical follow ups through internships and new laboratories and libraries. Finally, WP4 was conceived as the direct implementation of the products developed during the previous phases with the specific aim of delivering the new BA teaching units to the students, as well as integrating the internships within the teaching units. Prior to the delivery of the BA teaching unit, a Cascade training was held in Italy. The training aimed to enhance the skills of the BA professors in teaching, researching and international outreach.

Work Packages 3 and 4 (WP3&4) are the focus of this external evaluation study.



Figure I: WALADU Project Activities Work Flow

II. Evaluation Purpose and Scope

This external evaluation study seeks to provide relevant information concerning the WALADU project experience in relation to the WP3&4 and key progress made. The study aims to determine the extent to what capacity the following have been effective in generating the expected results: 1) the development and delivery of the new teaching units (including the testing phase during the summer school); the establishment of the internships (practical follow up); 3) supporting labs and libraries.

In detail, the primary purpose of this evaluation is to determine the extent to which key objectives and targets related to WP3&4 were achieved by employing the 5 OECD-DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability, as well as early effects and cross cutting issues. More specifically, the evaluation aims to achieve the objectives listed below, respectively for accountability and learning purposes.

The **accountability component** of the evaluation aims to:

- Highlight WP3&4 successes and challenges throughout implementation;
- Assess project's early effects by identifying seeds for long-term and sustainable change.

The learning component of the evaluation aims to:

- Identify key lessons learnt from the implementation of WP3&4;
- Identify the level of need and appropriateness for future work.

Report Structure

The report starts by illustrating the methodology and approach employed.

The report later presents the **findings** of the evaluation by analyzing various aspects of the WP3&4, such as its objectives and the **operational strategy/approach** and **implementation**. Every aspect of the WPs is linked to relevant evaluation criteria ranging from relevance to effectiveness, and from immediate results and sustainability to efficiency.

Finally, **conclusions** and a set of **recommendations/observations** are provided. The annexes section provides an overview of the tools used during the data collection, such as the evaluation grid, the interview guide and the questionnaires. An overview of the report's content is provided in the **executive summary**.

III. Methodology

The external evaluation process consists of the following three phases:

- I. The inception/desk phase (April/May 2019) focused on defining in detail the overall structure of the evaluation study with regard to the evaluation scope, expectations and requirements. To that effect, the first crucial step for the consultants was to map and understand key features of WP3 and WP4. This step was instrumental to refining the external evaluation methodological approach, work plan and data collection tools. After an inception phase, during which the consultants established contact and exchanged relevant project material and information, the overall and refined methodology, including the use of a mixed data collection approach, was agreed upon and the data collection tools were designed and validated by the project team (including translation of questionnaire into Arabic).
- II. The consultation phase (June/July 2019) involved mainly primary data collection from beneficiaries and collection of inputs from all relevant stakeholders who have been involved in the project experience. The consultations were conducted remotely (through Skype calls for qualitative data and administration of questionnaires for quantitative data) and in accordance with the work plan agreed with the project team. Upon the completion of the consultation process, the team of consultants provided the WALADU team with a briefing on preliminary findings and results.
- III. The synthesis phase (August/September 2019) entailed the consolidation of information collected throughout the previous phases to formulate and share learning outcomes.

The methodology used for the analysis includes:

- Basic thematic coding and frequency counts to identify key themes emerged across data and their incidence;
- Triangulations;
- Identification of cause-effects statements, both explicit and implicit.

As a result of this process, the final report was drafted and finalized after incorporating the inputs of the project team.

The methodology used throughout the evaluation exercise primarily focused on analyzing the process to achieve the expected outcomes and to determine the immediate effects of the two work packages. Particular attention was given to the level of participation of all partners in the design and implementation of the new teaching units, the internships, labs and libraries and changes generated at different levels.





Data Collection Methods

In order to gather the required data for the external evaluation, quantitative and qualitative data collection methods have been employed in correlation with the WALADU project's constituencies. These are: semi-structured and in-depth interviews with project team, beneficiaries (admin staff) and stakeholders, questionnaires for students who have attended the summer schools, and the new teaching units' questionnaires for professors. This

evaluation exercise involved a total of 67 (half of which females to maintain gender balance) people through the different data collection methods previously listed, as indicated in the table below. Additional information on the interviewed stakeholders can be found in Annex II:

| Target group | Data Collection Method | Sample |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| Project staff (Bologna and Koç) | In-depth interviews | 4 respondents |
| Summer schools participants | Online questionnaire | 22 respondents |
| Admin staff | In-depth interviews | 3 respondents |
| Professors Iraqi Universities | Questionnaires | 8 respondents |
| Students Iraqi Universities | Questionnaires | 30 respondents |

The sampling methodology adopted was the convenience, non-probability sampling approach (voluntary sampling). Project staff and professors at the Iraqi universities disseminated to all reachable beneficiaries a communication informing them about the aims and modality of the survey and inviting them to take part in both the online and traditional survey.

Limitations

The evaluation team did not identify any issue in accessing information and documentation to develop the evaluation design matrix and did not face major problems while conducting the evaluation. However, some few limitations should be mentioned in relation to the data collection.

- Limited students sample size

Due to the fact that the new teaching units were already concluded and that some of them were difficult to reach the number of students to which the questionnaire was delivered was limited to ten (10) in each university.

- <u>Bias</u>

Respondents, especially students in Iraq, are not used to providing this type of feedback on university courses they participate in or on professors' teaching methods. They may think that positive feedback is what is required from them, even if honest answers were encouraged and anonymity assured. The difference between the summer school online survey, to which international students participated, and the questionnaires filled by the Iraqi students reinforces this limitation.

SECTION TWO: FINDINGS

I. Reflections on Relevance and Effectiveness

The project's thematic areas and linked activities are highly **relevant**, particularly given the Iraqi context and the overall needs of Iraqi universities to improve the quality of their teaching and research methodology in the archeological field. To address this gap, the WALADU project envisages a mixed methodology that combines research and practical activities, including training for teaching staff, development validation and delivery of new teaching units, creation of international avenues for best practices exchange and dissemination of results. The review of the project documentation (including previous WPs evaluations), background information, and feedback from key informants showed that the project design, besides being relevant to the target groups' needs, is also consistent with international and national policies¹.

The intervention logic is coherent and the results chain comprehensive, showing wellformulated and focused outcomes and outputs. These mirror the three interlinked components of the project (please see diagram below).



¹ For a more detailed explanation on this, please see WP2 external evaluation, page 10.

Compared to their initial formulation at adoption, the work packages under evaluation (WP3&4) have also been proven to be relevant over time. WP3&4 were designed to support previously trained junior professors (WP2) with further training (cascade training) and during the development and implementation, according to internationally accepted standards, of the new teaching units syllabi. To complement these teaching units, the project established internship programs in national and international institutions through a participatory methodology that comprised of meetings at different levels between universities representatives and authorities. Teaching Labs (WaLab) and libraries (WaLib) were set up in each university to improve their teaching offers and methodology. Some of the activities were implemented according to a slightly modified work plan to accommodate relevant participants' needs and implementation challenges demonstrating flexibility and adaptability.

The Pilot Summer School: results and achievements

To assess whether the activities related to WP3&4 were effective, this evaluation starts by analyzing the capacity-strengthening strategy and approach of the Pilot Summer School that took place in August 2018 and was hosted and organized by the Koç University. The summer school brought together students from all the universities involved in the project, which is also confirmed by the profile of the 22 respondents to the online survey as can be seen in the below graph.



For some of the Iraqi students the Summer School was the first exchange experience outside their country and a great opportunity to be exposed to a different teaching methodology, which included the use of technological advanced tools and labs, and to practice their English skills. The language barrier was indicated by most of the people interviewed as one of the main challenges for the Iraqi students preventing, at least at the beginning of the school, interaction with other students and lecturers. However, this experience was a great opportunity to improve their language and communication skills and to measure themselves with the American-based teaching system, meaning a balanced mix of lectures and practice, on which the Koç University structure is based.

The Summer School was also an opportunity to test the new BA teaching units, as the topics not normally taught in Iraq were included in the programme. This gave the opportunity to show how syllabi would be applied in practice, through a mix of lectures in the classrooms and work in the labs. Each syllabus was then replicated in Iraq employing the same methodology when facilities allowed it.

When asked to identify their motivations for attending the Summer school, as can be seen in the graph below, the majority of students affirmed that it was to learn new topics, followed by the fact that it was an interesting opportunity abroad or that, in their country of origin, there were few available opportunities like the Summer School. The combination of these replies confirms that an exchange experience, especially if it includes new teaching/learning methodologies and topics, is important to strengthen the skills and capacity of every student. It is even more important if similar opportunities are not available in countries such as Iraq, demonstrating once more the relevance of the WALADU project vis-a vis the beneficiary's needs.



"Now we have a foundation and we would have to build the wall" was the expression used by one of the organizers of the Summer School to explain its effectiveness and results during the interview. This statement is backed up by the results of the online survey, which demonstrates that this was a successful experience that students would definitely recommend to their peers (3.92 score out of 4 as showed below in the table). Moreover, the majority of the students declared that they were satisfied by the quality of the teaching (3.92 out of 4) and by its innovative aspects (3.63 out of 4). In their feedback, students also felt that their knowledge improved (3.79 out of 4) and that their expectations were met. However, the length of the experience was considered to be too short, as the majority of the



students declared and almost all of them suggested for the next time to consider the idea of having a longer course span rather than only two weeks.

According to the organizers this activity can be considered the first of what it can become a permanent teaching offer in the host University. The positive outcome and feedback received gave the input to organize an additional study (a survey project) involving the Iraqi students of the Summer School to be implemented in October /November 2019. An unforeseen outcome and a way to invest on the student's capacity strengthening and in a long-term cooperation between the partner universities which also reinforces the sustainability of the activity in the long run.

Setting up WaLib and WaLab

To improve the partner Iraqi universities' teaching methodology and standards, the project established a new technical laboratory and library in each: Baghdad, Kufa and Al- Qadisyah. In line with the project branding strategy, the new facilities were called WaLab (the laboratory) and WaLib (the library).

The process to establish the facilities was highly participatory, as stated by interviewed staff. Several meetings to understand what were the different needs of the three universities were held and a list of equipment and books was identified. The setting up of the labs and the libraries took longer than planned at project proposal stage due to the complicated purchasing and shipping procedures of the public universities involved. The purchasing of the equipment and a first set of books,, at the end, was made through the Koç University, which is a non-profit private entity, and at the time of this evaluation some books and equipment were still on their way to the Iraqi universities. One of the major issues encountered in relation to the purchasing of the equipment was the acquiring and shipping of the drones nowadays largely employed in archeological excavations. A lot of paperwork was required to certify that the equipment was going to be used for study and researches purposes and not for illicit or dangerous activities.

All the admin staff interviewed (3 respondents), in relation to the setting up of the labs and libraries, expressed satisfaction about the process and the end results, stating that they were positive on the impact that the new facilities would have on the students and the quality of teaching offered by their universities. The same has been affirmed by most professors and assistant professors (8 respondents in total), especially in Kufa and Al-Qadisiyah that took part in the survey, as can be seen by the following chart.



Moreover the professor's feedback, when asked if the labs and libraries would help in improving student's skills, was very positive and unanimous. A trend which was also corroborated by the interviews with the admin staff and the project staff in Bologna. The importance of having updated books and technologically advanced equipment to develop the practical skills of students in the archeological field was mentioned several times.



However, from the collected data, it emerged that—especially in Kufa and Baghdad Universities—students are not yet using the facilities on a regular basis (please see the graph below). The reasons, according to the interviewed staff, vary: the inauguration and opening of the facilities later than scheduled at the end of the academic year (Baghdad); the permission to use the drones by the Iraqi army that was yet to be approved (Baghdad); the language barriers since the books are all in English (which was the only possible option because specialized texts on the chosen topics are in English).



The feedback received from the students, through the survey, confirmed the trend (please see below). In some universities (Kufa) the majority of students declared that they are regularly using the new labs and libraries and in some others (especially Baghdad but also Al-Qadisiyah) the use is more sporadic, for the reasons already mentioned.



When asked about the modalities employed to record the use and frequency with which the students were using WaLib and WaLab, two out of three university staff explained that they have registers/log books in which the students sign their names every time they use the facilities, which is a good practice. However, none of them has a feedback mechanism in place to collect data on the student's user experience, including challenges or suggestions on how improve the usability of the facilities. This is an important issue to consider for the Iraqi Universities and the WALADU project's partners. To have such a feedback mechanism (suggestion box, or regular surveys for the students) will help the universities to improve the quality of their services, but also would contribute to internal accountability and transparency.

Finally, the professor's suggestions on how to improve the new facilities focused on the importance of keeping the labs and the libraries up to date, therefore adding more books and dictionaries of ancient languages or archeological reviews, new equipment, getting regular updates on research methods and technologies, and some suggested also to build a dedicated new building to host both the lab and the library to attract more students.

The Cascade Training

The Cascade Training falls within the capacity building component of the WALADU project since it aimed to enhance the skills of the Iraqi BA professors in teaching and researching to provide extensive support and to improve the BA courses in Archaeology in their respective universities. Moreover, the training aimed to strengthen the partner universities' international outreach through ad hoc sessions and strategic discussions on the importance of networking with international organizations and universities (for which the project has also created an online platform called WaLink) and fundraising. The training took place from December 10-14, 2018 in Italy and was hosted and organized by the University of Bologna for 22 junior and senior Iraqi scholars.

The training focused on teaching and research, new methodology in archeology and internationalization, with detailed presentations on modern technologies applied to archeological studies, such as: remote sensing and the use of satellite imagery including Geoeye, Worldview and Landsat and well as Lidar sensors which can achieve unrivaled precision for the documentation of archaeological sites when integrated with drones for data collection.

The project coordinator at the University of Bologna thought it was important to share some reflections on the opportunities that the WALADU project provided for the partner universities to improve their teaching methodologies, research quality as well as the development of the new syllabi and future opportunities. Specifically, the emphasis was put on the premise that the "Internationalization of higher education is the top stage of International relations among universities and it is no longer regarded as a goal in itself but

as a means to improve the quality of education^{"²} showing the project's implementers strategy to provide their Iraqi counterparts with the tools and means to step up in the international environment. The feedback gathered on the cascade training, through the interviews, was positive. The trainees found it very useful and effective, especially the focus on the modern technologies applied to archeology, which is a structural gap for Iraqi Universities due to lack of knowledge and funds. The training also laid the groundwork for peer support and future cooperation with existing partners, as well as other institutions, therefore strengthening its long-term sustainability.

The new teaching units (development and implementation)

The development to the new teaching units concerned the first year of implementation and it was a result of a concerted effort by the WALADU partners. The syllabi were developed during the capacity building phases in the European Universities, employing a bottom up and participative approach, and went trough a rigorous selection process according to the higher education European standards. Different factors were taken into consideration by the WALADU staff while selecting the syllabi, such as the innovative aspects of the proposed topics and the overall structure (including a balance between practical and theoretical) among others. At the end of the process, 16 syllabi were selected—10 of which were implemented this year and 6 of which will be implemented during the next academic year. The new syllabi are both in English and Arabic, including the teaching materials, and focus on several new subjects, such as: Introduction to GIS (Geographic Information System), Museum Studies and Archeology, Manuscripts and Islamic Paintings and Akkadian Language, among others³. Nine specific didactic materials and two educational web GIS platforms⁴ have been jointly created during the trainings in order to improve the Iraqi higher institution's' teaching quality. These materials are highly requested by teaching staff and students, due to the inherent lack of funds and access. Therefore, the WALADU coordinator is currently considering the opportunity to expand the offer and increase availability of more didactic materials.

The survey and the interviews evidenced a general satisfaction for the support received by the University of Bologna during the development and implementation phase of the syllabi. As explained to the evaluation team several times, the project implementation staff was always available to help with their expertise through one-on-one sessions (mostly online) and written feedback. The end results were largely appreciated by both teaching staff and students, specifically, as can be seen on the figure below, 4 out of 8 respondents among the professors agreed that the courses were innovative. This was also confirmed during the

 $^{^2}$ Tahira Jibeen, Masha Asad Khan (2015). Internationalization of Higher Education: Potential Benefits and Costs. This was the introductory slide of the session on internationalization by Prof. Marchetti for the Cascade Training

³ For the full list please see WALADU's website: https://site.unibo.it/WALADU/en/results/wp3-teaching-units-and-internships

⁴ http://www.orientlab.net/orientdams/; <u>http://www.orientlab.net/orientdams/orientgis-</u> map/

interviews and further explained to the evaluation team as an important addition to the Iraqi universities teaching offerings, since there are no other similar courses available.

Moreover, all of them expressed their overall satisfaction for the support received while developing the syllabi by the WALADU staff, arguing during the interviews that they were particularly grateful to be able to interact with renown European scholars and to have had the opportunity to learn how European universities work. The majority of them were also satisfied by the learning materials developed for the courses and for the received support in integrating practical tools and exercises in the syllabi.



When asked about their expectations, in terms of the number of students attending the new teaching courses, the majority of the respondents declared that the final results were absolutely in line with what expected, except for one responded from the University of Baghdad. The question of the survey did not allow for any extra explanation, even if general open-ended questions were asked at the end of the survey, therefore the reasons why the expectations were not met are not clear.



In order to understand the attitude of the professors towards the international standards of quality education, the survey asked some questions related to the practice of gathering feedback and suggestions from the students, specifically, on the BA courses. Interestingly enough, all of them were positive on the usefulness of such tools (in this case, they were asked about a questionnaire but it was just a practical example). However, not all of them were as positive to the idea of administering the questionnaire to their students. This issue was further explored during the interviews and it emerged that possible negative feedback was considered detrimental for the professor's reputation, and that the students were not ready for such change since it is not yet customary in Iraq, according to university staff and professors' points of view.



It is therefore evident that this issue requires more attention from the implementing partners to foster a sustainable long-term attitude's change. Another aspect to take into consideration are the differences from university to university; for instance, Baghdad is the university presenting more critical issues than the other two, as the data is clearly showing.

Feedback from the students on the new teaching units

This evaluation was able to collect and triangulate the feedback from 87 students on the implementation of the new teaching units. The first question asked in the survey aimed to understand what motivated the students to attend the new teaching courses. The majority of them replied that they were interested in the topic (which, as it was already mentioned, are new as compared to the Iraqi university curriculum), followed by the necessity to prepare for an examination and by the suitability of dates, the reputation of the lecturer and, for a few of them, the fact that there were no other options available (please see the chart below for more details).

This feedback proves that the choices operated by the trained junior and senior scholars, with the support from the WALADU staff, were relevant to the needs of the students and improved the teaching offerings of the target universities.



To better understand the level of satisfaction of the students in relation to the courses they attended, as well as the courses' effectiveness, the survey asked several questions related to their organizational aspects. Firstly, students were asked to identify a statement that better reflected their perception regarding gained knowledge.

As the figure below shows, the overall feedback was very positive. The majority of the respondents affirmed that the courses "substantially increased their knowledge of the subject "or "it gave them adequate knowledge of the subject" and none of them selected the third option "I did not learn anything about the subject." The breakdown of the data per university tells us that in Kufa and Al-Qadisiyah, students were more positively impacted by the courses, whilst in Baghdad the feedback was more heterogeneous.

The reasons behind this feedback might need more queries at the final impact evaluation stage, however it is important to highlight that all data collected by the surveys show that Baghdad University requires more attention to reach the standards envisaged by the project. These are in line with the data showed in the previous paragraph.



The students were asked to give a feedback on the course structure, specifically by the multiple-choice question: *Was the course structure well organized?*" 99% of the respondents from Kufa and Al-Qadisiyah replied positively ("Yes" out of four options: Yes, Fairly well, Not always, Not at all), while 1% replied "Fairly well." Students' answers from Baghdad University varied also in this case: 85% replied "Yes," 5% replied "Fairly well" and 10% replied "Not always."

The figure below tells us that the teaching material developed and provided to the students mostly contributed to the understanding of the subject taught during the courses. In all three Universities, the majority of feedback was positive with very few affirming that the teaching material sometimes (3 people from Al-Qadisiyah) or not always (2 people from Baghdad) contributed to understanding the subject matter. Most of the students' comments highlighted that they appreciated using technology, specifically touchscreens, during the classes, as well as other interactive materials, which evidenced that introducing this type of teaching support/materials was effective.



The survey included a section to gather information on the lecturers' abilities to explain the subject matter and interact with the students, among other factors. As shown in the table below, the students were provided with several statements to which they were asked to agree/disagree according to a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 meant "I totally disagree" and 5 "I totally agree." For the statement, "the lecturer is always prepared for the class," the feedback was highly positive for Kufa, and mixed for Al-Quadisiya (where 2 people were in total disagreement) and Baghdad (where 6 people selected "4" and 1 student "3"). The "lecturer explain the subject matter in a way that is easy to understand" recorded a more varied reply with 66 very positive feedback from the three universities, 16 people selecting 4 out of 5 (8 from Baghdad, 1 from Al-Qadisiyah and 7 from Kufa); 2 people selecting 3 out of 5 (one from Baghdad and one from Al-Qadisiyah); 3 students from the Al-Qadisiyah being in total disagreement. According to the majority of the respondents (80 students) the "lecturer used examples to explain theoretical issues" during the course (4 students from Baghdad and 2 from Kufa selected "4 out of 5"; 2 from Al-Qadisiyah and Baghdad selected "3 out of 5") and "shows interest in the student's learning success" for 81 (out of 87) students. Finally,

the lecturer "is responsive to questions and feedback from students" for the large majority of the students that took the survey, 84 out of 87, which is a very positive indicator showing a positive interaction between students and professors, and one of the aspects leading to effective teaching.



The list of what the students' liked the most about the new courses includes innovative teaching methodologies and tools, the usefulness of the information received (as apposed to other regular courses), and the interactive/practical activities such as drawing on ceramics or using the smart screen, as previously mentioned.

Finally, when asked suggestions/recommendations on how to improve the course, most of the comments related to increasing the practical aspects: having direct excavation experience in the archeological sites to study visits with their professors; having more books and specialized publication to strengthening the quality of their research; more opportunities for practical exercises and specialized labs. This demonstrates that the project is delivering according to its expected results, both in terms of innovative design of new BA courses and teaching methodology, which were effective in increasing the student's knowledge of the new subject matters.

Internships

Given the lack of practical follow-up, in combination with formal lectures in the Iraqi universities, the WALADU project also aimed to establish internships in cooperation with national authorities and the partner's universities. It was not a straightforward process due to the different perception of what an internship should guarantee and how it should be organized. The WALADU staff worked hard to finalize a Memorandum of Understanding with local authorities, such as the Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage (SBAH) that manages the National Heritage Sites and National Museums in Iraq. Moreover, also the Museum of the Shrine of the Imam Abbas in Kerbala, has confirmed its availability to offer internship programs to the students of the Universities of Kufa and Al-Qadisiyah.

Resistance to the idea, or at least some misconceptions or misunderstanding towards the internships, was due to the fact that it is a voluntary program that cannot reimburse participation costs (and this was an issue for the Iraqi Universities) and cannot guarantee that the interns will surely get a job after its ending. The involvement of the partners' universities in this activity varied from enthusiasm to skepticism, especially regarding their direct participation to guarantee the implementation of the internships and its sustainability once the project ends. As can be seen from the graph below, when it was asked to the professors if their university would continue with the internship program their feedback was mostly positive. However, when enquired further about the issue during the interview, professors' main answer was "the system in Iraq is complicated" and "in Iraq, students are not used to doing internships and we are not sure it will be successful" or "we do not have the budget to implement the activity in the long term."



All the previous statements indicate that: the practical follow up of higher education courses is not seen yet as part of the course itself and its usefulness and strategic implications are still to be understood. The WALADU project has the merit to have identified this gap and to have put in place a first attempt to address it. In fact, the internship program is currently in place, but a lot of work still needs to be done to change the overall mindsets of the Universities' boards and staff. This is evident in the opposition, at least in relation to the data gathered by this evaluation, with the students' views. Through the survey, students were asked if they were planning to participate to the internship program and the majority replied affirmatively, as shown in the figure below. Moreover, as already highlighted, one of their main requests for the future is to have more possibilities to get practical experience from labs, museums, excavations sites, libraries etc.



II. Reflections on Efficiency

Evaluations intend efficiency as: "achieving maximum output from a given level of resources used to carry out an activity." Considering the scope of this evaluation that concerns only WP 3& 4 and not the overall project only partial information is available to enable a thorough assessment of the degree of efficiency that has been achieved by the WALADU project. However, some reflection could be put forwards on the implementation participatory methodologies the project pursues, which corresponds to project plans and human resources envisaged by the proposal in agreements with all the partners. In the light of resources employed, the project can be considered relatively efficient, however a more attentive analysis should be carried out, considering whether or not the project is making the best use of its primary resources- time, finances and relationships-, at final and impact evaluation stage.

As suggested by previous evaluations, the working relationship between project partners appears to be based on mutual respect and common goals, which led to a fair assignment of implementation responsibilities in reference to the different WPs to each European partner (LMU Munich, UNIBO and Koç). Furthermore, a number of strategies and working modalities are in place to guarantee a coordinated and transparent project implementation (WP5), from regular meetings (Consortium Assembly meetings) to publishing every relevant document on the WALADU website. This evaluation already demonstrated that Iraqi partners are satisfied by the participatory bottom-up approach and often highlighted how their needs were always taken into consideration to inform and adapt the activities.

III. Early Effects and Sustainability

It is rather early to define the long-term effects of the project specifically, whether the progress to date has produced positive results or negative results, and the relation of these to the overall goal of the project; firstly because it is beyond the scope of this evaluation and secondly because the project is still being implemented. However, some early effects of the activities related to WP3&4 can already be identified and analyzed, and further confirmed or rejected at the final impact evaluation stage.

Taking into consideration the analysis carried out in the previous evaluation of WP2 in relation to some changes occurring at the individual level, as reported profusely by the trainings' target groups, the evaluation team tried to understand if the perception of the beneficiaries is somehow changing towards the new teaching standards and methodology.

Through the use of a software, it was possible to obtain a word cloud that summarizes the interrelations between respondents' statements and suggestions gathered by the survey and the interviews. As can be seen from the picture below the words used more often by the interviewed students and professors are "modern", "teaching", "new", "practical" "technology", "methodology" and "syllabus", which all point out, as also evidenced by the previous data, to the fact that the modernization of the courses and teaching methodology was so far achieved.



Of course, this is valid only for the first 10 courses and needs further evaluation and analysis, but it is an important indicator to take into consideration for the remaining activities. The same can be affirmed for the effects of the summer schools: according to the interviews, they were important at individual and group level, especially for the Iraqi students that had to interact in a completely different environment while facing important language barriers.

It would be particularly interesting to assess the impact of the internship program to understand if it would effectively provide more employment opportunities and if it would change the perception of the universities' boards on its usefulness, as well as link the results to a wider change at the community-level that, at the time of the compilation of this report, is still too difficult to perceive. However, it is significant to record the eagerness of the Iraqi students to participate in the program and the constant request for more practical activities, evidently still a wide gap in Iraqi higher education Institutions.

The practical follow up of the new teaching units (internship program) is strictly linked to the sustainability of the activities envisaged in WP3&4. Sustainability is often simplistically defined as continuation of existing activities. However, this evaluation considers a more holistic view of "sustainability" based on the wealth of knowledge and possibilities the WALADU project is creating to its target groups, being the universities' prosperity (new labs, techs and libraries as well as a more interesting teaching offer and international connections and linkages) or professors and students individual's journey (more competencies, knowledge and opportunities).

In this sense, WALADU is working well towards its overall sustainability by enhancing individual capacities and fostering an enabling environment for Iraqi universities to uphold international teaching standards and cooperation at the highest level. In this regard, it would be interesting to monitor the use of WaLink by the Iraqi partners and to provide them with writing project skills to enhance their capacity to get international funding and aim at long-term partnership with several international organizations.

SECTION THREE: LEARNING OUTCOMES & RECOMMENDATIONS

The WALADU project has developed through a two-year journey within a context that presents significant challenges and complexities at the social, economic and political levels. The project has worked towards laying down the basis to achieve long-lasting results by supporting local capacities of higher education institutions, as a means to promote change towards the modernization of education policies and to provide students with an education that is more aligned with the needs of the labour market and society. So far, the project has proved its capacity to include specific solicitations and address demands driven by its partners, specifically the Iraqi counterparts, in a participatory and effective fashion.

Building on the confirmation that WALADU and specifically WP3&4 are highly relevant to the Iraqi context, this evaluation has analyzed and presented key areas of progress towards the

achievements of its specific objectives, its early effects at the individual levels and the work towards its sustainability. This section highlights some of the main learning outcomes that have emerged from triangulating the results of this evaluation with relevant contextual insights and related recommendations.

One general consideration departs from the fact that the Iraqi society is highly stratified and it is not customary to require feedback from people in lower positions. This societal stratification is reflected also in institutions, such as the universities in which the idea of collecting regular feedback from students on professors' performance and/or other organizational aspects is still in its early stages. This was evidenced by the lack of a coherent and shared methodology to assess the use of WaLib and WaLab, as well as collecting direct feedback at the end of the new teaching units. Engaging the administrative and teaching staff on a discussion toward the identification of a shared methodology to collect feedback from the students is an interesting area of improvement for the WALADU project. The introduction of such methodology will help in measuring the effectiveness, and possibly the impact, of the new syllabi and ultimately strengthen universities' transparency and accountability.

The following are additional key lessons and recommendations that emerged from the issues highlighted in this evaluation:

1) Internship program and linkages with employers:

One of the main issues raised from the Iraqi universities towards the establishment of the internship program was that there is no guaranteed for future employability, in addition to the lack of funds for the internship program's implementation. The data indicated the need to continue improving the practical aspects of the courses. Moreover, more focus should be put towards a general change of perception on the usefulness of the internship program as a voluntary program that does not require large funds to be set up and coordinated on a regular basis. However, linkages with potential employers could be sought in an increasingly systematic way to tailor the internship program to market demands in combination with income generation activities, which can constitute an additional component for future initiatives.

2) Opportunities for greater international coordination:

Through WaLink, the project has already set the basis for long term and larger international coordination. It would be important to continue working to improve the platform for better coordination and fundraising opportunities, as well as to provide the Iraqi counterparts with skills related to project proposals and grants writing.

3) Replication and expansion of the summer school experience:

The summer school experience was very successful, and it would be advisable to expand and replicate it for future initiatives. It would be important to provide further opportunities for Iraqi students to study abroad but it would also be

interesting for foreign students in archeology to go to Iraq for a practical experience in their archeological sites, if safety requirements are met.

4) Advocacy actions at the national and international levels:

In line with previous evaluation recommendations also this report suggests a more structured advocacy action geared towards promoting a dialogue with ministries and authorities to advocate at the national level for innovative teaching methodologies (including internships) that are in line with international standards to be included in the official curriculum.

| Annex I: | Evaluation | Matrix/Grid |
|----------|------------|-------------|
|----------|------------|-------------|

| Questions | Sub -Questions | Measures or Indicators | Target or Standard | Baselin e Data | Data Sources | Data Collection |
|--|---|--|-----------------------|-------------------|---|--|
| To what extent WP 3&4's design is consistent with the target group needs? | | • Level of participation and interaction of the target groups in the activities | | | Feedback from WALADU staff (each university), target groups Project material | Interviews with key informants/ Review of relevant material |
| To what extent have WP3&4 expected outcomes been achieved? | • How effective were the new teaching units and learning materials at transferring the competences and knowledge acquired by Iraqi | Quality of teaching units and materials/feedback from students on the quality of teaching and transferring of knowledge # of syllabus including | | | Project records, including self- appraisal forms (if any)/feedback of target population | Interviews/ Review of relevant material |
| | To what extent did target groups (students) were satisfied with the new teaching units and materials? | <i>a</i> or synabus including innovative aspects/in line with international standards Level of satisfaction about the course of students (organizational and quality) | | | Project records/ Feedback of Uni staff, target groups, / Official records | Interviews/ques tionnaires/Revie w of relevant material |

| | To what extent Walid and Walab have strengthen the quality of teaching offer at the Iraqi universities? To what extent the summer school supported the testing of the new BA's teaching units? | teachers and admin staff on the facilities/use of the facilities from students/feedback of students | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| | To what extent are the internship programmes available and accessible to students? | Engagement of senior staff with institution to allow partnership/ availability of info about the programmes/enrollmen t rate (disaggregation)/inclusi on of women and people with special needs | | |
| How sustainable are the outcomes achieved by WP3&4? | What factors hinder or support the long-term sustainability of | Long term availability of new teaching course Evaluation mechanism on new BA course in | Project records/Feedbac k of FH staff and target population | Review of relevant material/ Interviews and focus groups |

| | key WP3&4 outputs? | place External/internal factor guaranteeing the upgrade of the courses at the uni in Iraq | | |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| To which extent the implementation mechanisms and the use of the available resources facilitated the attainment of WP3&4 objectives? | How successful was UNIBO and partners in implementing and managing WP3&4? | Identification and use of implementation strategies (check and balances mechanism – SC and consortium assembly) | Project records/Feedbac k of FH Staff and project stakeholders | Review of relevant material/ Interviews |
| To what extent were cross cutting issues such as gender equality, good governance, mainstreamed through the implementation of WP3&4? | | • Cross cutting issues were integrated in the design and implementation of the WPs adequately | Project records/Feedbac k of FH Staff and project stakeholders | Review of relevant material/ Interviews and focus groups |

Annex III: Evaluation Questionnaire BA courses (to be translated into Arabic and administered to students)

The University of Bologna is conducting an external evaluation related to the WALADU project to which your university is part. This questionnaire has been developed to gather information from students on the quality of the new BA courses developed within the frameowrk of the project. The questionaires are anonymous. Your feedback is a vital part of this process. Thank you.

PART I

PLEASE CIRCLE A RESPONSE FOR EACH QUESTION. IF TWO RESPONSES APPLY, CIRCLE BOTH. WHEN YOU ARE DONE, RETURN THE QUESTIONNAIRE TO XXX

- 1. MALE/FEMALE:
- 2. COURSE TITLE:
- 3. NAME OF THE LECTURER:
- 4. WHAT IS/ARE YOUR MAJOR/S:
- 5. WHAT IS YOUR MINOR (IF ANY):
- 6. WHAT IS YOUR CLASS STANDING?
 - A) NON-MATRICULATED
 - B) FRESHMAN
 - c) SOPHOMORE
 - d) junior
 - E) SENIOR
- 7. WHY DID YOU ATTEND THE COURSE? (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSOBLE)

 \Box interest in topic \Box compulsory course

| □ preparation for examination | □ reputation of lecturer |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| □ suitable dates | □ no alternative available |
| □ other reasons | |

- 8. How many classes of the course did you attend?
 - □ All □ All but one

 \Box All but two \Box All but three

□ I missed more than three classes

9. (REPLY ONLY IF YOU MISSED SOME CLASSES) WHY DID YOU MISS CLASSES? (MULTIPLE ANSWERS POSSIBLE)

| □ self-study | employment |
|------------------------------|------------|
| □ overlap with other courses | □ illness |
| □ Other | |

PART II

10. How would you evaluate the quality of the course you attended?

- A. IT SUBSTANTIALLY INCREASED MY KNOWLEDGE OF THE SUBJECT
- B. It gave me adequate knowledge of the subject $% \mathcal{B} = \mathcal{B} = \mathcal{B}$
- C. I DID NOT LEARN ANYTHING ABOUT THE SUBJECT

11. Was the course structure well organized?

| □ yes | □ fairly well |
|-------|---------------|
| | |

 \Box not always \Box not at all

12. DID THE TEACHING MATERIALS PROVIDED CONTRIBUTE TO UNDERSTANDING THE SUBJECT MATTER?

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\Box yes \Box yes, sometimes
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| 🗆 not alwa | ys | | | not at | all | |
|---------------------------------|------------|----------|-----------|----------|-----------|-------------------------------|
| 13. How would class? | 9 YOU EVA | LUATE | YOUR INT | ERACTI | ONS WITH | H THE LECTURER/PROFESSOR IN |
| A) VERY HE | LPFUL | | | | | |
| B) FAIRLY H | ELPFUL | | | | | |
| C) NOT HEL | PFUL | | | | | |
| 14. Please stat circle the e | | | | | | DLLOWING STATEMENTS (SST) |
| The professor/l | ECTURE | R | | | | |
| A IS ALWAYS | WELL PR | EPARED | FOR THE | E CLASS | | |
| I totally disagree | | | | | | I totally agree |
| BEXPLAIN TH | HE SUBJEC | СТ МАТТ | ER IN A V | WAY THA | AT IS EAS | Y TO UNDERSTAND |
| I totally disagree | | | | | | I totally agree |
| CUSES EXAM | PLES TO I | EXPLAIN | THEORE | CTICAL | ISSUES | |
| I totally disagree | | | | | | I totally agree |
| D SHOWS IN | TEREST I | N THE S' | rudent' | S LEARN | ING SUCC | ESS |
| I totally disagree | | | | | | I totally agree |
| E IS RESPON | ISIVE TO (| QUESTIO | NS AND | FEEDBA | CK FROM | STUDENTS |
| I totally disagree | | | | | | I totally agree |
| 15. What did yo | OU LIKE A | BOUT T | HE COUR | se? (fri | ee text) | |

| 16. Wha | T RECOMMENDATIONS DO YOU HAVE FOR IMPROVING THE COURSE? (FREE TEXT) |
|--------------------------|--|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| L 7. Do y WALA | OU USE THE NEW RESOURCE CENTER (LABORATORY) AND LIBRARY (WALIB AND AB)? |
| A) RI | EGULARLY |
| B) SC | DMETIMES |
| C) NI | EVER |
| | OU PLAN TO PARTICIPATE IN THE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM PROVIDED BY THE ERSITY? |
| A) Y | ES |
| в) N | 0 |
| IF NG | D, PLEASE SPECIFY WHY |
| | |