

EDUCATION AND RESEARCH CAPACITY BUILDING IN ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING: WATER STUDIES INSTITUTE OF BIRZEIT UNIVERSITY A CASE

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ABSTRACT

The management and protection of the scarce water and environmental resources in Palestine require appropriate education and research capacity building. How to develop and sustain capacity building in environmental education and research to protect the environment under the current economical, administrative and political constraints, is a real challenge. This paper presents the various capacity building activities of the Water Studies Institute (WSI) at Birzeit University (BZU) during the last ten years and highlights the gained experience in education and scientific research capacity in water and environmental management. An attempt was made to establish why this capacity is weak in some fields, how it can be strengthened and which water and environmental resource areas need to be focused on. The major constraints faced, and future plans to sustain the activities of the WSI are also introduced and discussed. Analysis and critical evaluation of the past and ongoing educational programs and research projects revealed the important role of WSI as an educational and research institute in promoting sustainable water and environmental structures in Palestine. Finally the problems solving approach adopted to overcome the constraints faced can be utilized by local, regional and international water and environmental institutions to sustain and enhance their activities.