Call for Proposals and Pilot Projects for a Comprehensive Tablet Solution in the Primary Classroom

Publication date: Wednesday 8th January 2014

Information Session: Wednesday 15th January 2014

Closure for submission of Proposal: Wednesday 5th February 2014
Rationale

The Maltese Government has announced in its Budget 2014 that in the process of implementing the ‘One Tablet Per Child’ initiative, pilot projects will be held to assess the use of tablet computing devices in the Maltese educational system. This will be carried out in line with the National Literacy Strategy that puts a strong emphasis on Literacy, Numeracy, Oracy, self-expression and Digital Skills.

Industry trends are clearly showing a transition in the choice of computing devices from desktop and laptop computers to mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets. While this trend confirms the consumer market’s confidence in the use of tablet computing devices, the impact on the education system is still being assessed abroad and still has to be examined locally.

The scope of the pilot projects is to carry out such an assessment in view of implementing the ‘One Tablet Per Child’ initiative to the maximum benefit of all stakeholders, especially students and teachers. Thus the primary aim of the pilot project is to evaluate how mobile technology will impact the teacher and the student and what provision will need to be taken so as to provide the smoothest rollout nationwide. It will assess how individualised learning can be achieved, how independence and self-initiated learning in students is increased and what type of learning can happen beyond the classroom.

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) stresses that digital literacy is a core competence that opens a gateway to lifelong learning. It enhances the teaching and learning processes, the interaction among peers, and interactions between students and teachers. It is driven by the need for increased access to learning which can be facilitated through a move towards 1:1 (one to one) student-centred teaching and learning that makes full use of the potential of technologies to enable children to show and create knowledge rather than passively consume it.

At the moment, the Ministry for Education and Employment (MEDE) considers tablet computing devices as a technological tool worth assessing in terms of their capabilities of increasing this access to learning and achieving the 1:1 vision and contributing towards the goals of the National Literacy Strategy. To this effect this Call for Proposals and Pilot Projects has clear educational goals that need to be achieved in the implementation of the ‘One Tablet Per Child’ initiative.

Instructions to Interested Candidates

Through this project, MEDE aims to analyse various models for a comprehensive teaching and learning solution based on the use of tablet computers in the Primary School sector starting from Year 4. Interested providers have the opportunity to submit a proposal and implement a pilot project in order to get hands on experience on the various issues related to the current technical infrastructure and pedagogical implications in Primary schools.
Eligible interested parties must submit their proposals in one original, clearly marked “original”, and one identical copy (including all documentation as in the original) signed in the same way as the original and clearly marked “copy”. Proposals must be submitted by not later than noon on Wednesday 5th February 2014 at the reception desk of the eLearning Centre, Education building, Great Siege Road, Floriana.

An information session will be held at the Customer Care Hall, Education building, Great Siege Road, Floriana on Wednesday 15th January 2014 at 9.30am during which interested parties may ask for further information prior to the submission of their proposal. Providers may also submit requests for clarifications via email to franco.costa@ilearn.edu.mt.

Interested Candidates will bear all costs associated with the preparation, submission and implementation including licences for their proposal and the actual running of the pilot project. MEDE will in no case be responsible or liable for such costs, whatever the conduct or outcome of the project may be. All equipment and resources deployed by the participating Candidates will be returned to the said Candidates on completion of the pilot project. In this regard, MEDE will incur no obligations.

All pilot projects will be individually evaluated by MEDE’s officials during and after the implementation phase. The evaluation will address the various areas of the tablet solution being proposed. MEDE will also evaluate the project as a whole. In this regard, MEDE will retain ownership of all outcomes and studies concluded through the analysis of the pilot projects but will share the individual results with the pertinent Candidate. Moreover, the intellectual property rights of all documentation produced through the analysis of this project shall belong exclusively to the MEDE. It is up to the Candidate to do his/her own research and share the conclusions with MEDE.

Any personal data acquired through the pilot project shall be processed pursuant to the Data Protection Act (2001).

Candidates submitting a proposal and subsequently participating in the pilot project will not, in any way, be given advantage in future contracts. However, participants in the pilot will gain valuable insight and experience in implementing such a solution in Maltese Schools.

The proposals submitted by all prospective providers will be evaluated in terms of Eligibility, Selection and Technical Compliance in order to be selected to participate in the pilot project.

MEDE will accept that providers who are at the pilot project phase may, at any stage of their pilot project, develop, improve, change or adapt their project in order to achieve their desired objectives. This will need to be justified by the provider and accepted by MEDE prior to the implementation. Thus it is suggested that Candidates opt for a continuous observation and evaluation of their product in the chosen classroom.
Eligibility Criteria

In order to be eligible, Candidates must:

- Be private companies, partnerships, joint ventures or consortia registered with the relevant authorities within a Member State of the European Union;

- Submit a proposal of the pilot project, which includes both hardware and software, within the specified closing date;

- Accept to implement the actual pilot project according to the submitted proposal and in line with the timeframes indicated in Annex 1 - Gantt chart.

Selection Criteria

In order to be eligible to participate in this pilot project, Candidates must provide evidence, in the form of project completion reports and/or reference letters from their clients (registered within a Member State of the European Union), which attest that the Candidate has the technical and/or educational expertise in this field.

In so listing the Candidate is giving his/her consent to MEDE, so that the latter may, if it deems necessary, contact the relevant Candidate’s clients, with a view to obtain from them an opinion on the services provided to them, by the Candidate.

Prior to the acceptance of the pilot project proposal submitted by the Candidates, MEDE reserves the right to:

- Set a meeting with the Candidates in order to obtain further information on their submission and verify its contents;

- Request a sample of the tablet device proposed in the submission for examination purposes.

Interested Candidates may submit multiple proposals with multiple pilot projects. In this case the Candidate must be capable to implement all the submitted proposals/projects.

Selected Candidates will be assigned a classroom (or more than one in accordance with the proposal) in Maltese Primary Schools. Locations will be assigned by MEDE after consultation with the Candidate. Candidates will be given access to visit the assigned location/s where the project will be conducted for the purpose of assessing, at the Candidate’s own responsibility, expense and risk,
The factors necessary for the preparation of the pilot project. The pilot project will be subdivided as per Gantt chart in Annex 1.

The proposal

The proposal must include:

1. Information related to the eligibility and selection criteria.
2. An outline of the approach including all activities proposed for the project’s implementation, in particular its objectives and expected results, thus demonstrating the degree of understanding of the project.
3. A list of all equipment (makes & models) in line with Annex 2 that will be used during the pilot project.
4. An outline of the training to be provided by the Candidate to teachers and students in the use of the proposed solution.
5. An outline of the support services that will be provided by the Candidate in support of the proposed solution.
6. An explanation on how the proposal and pilot project will address the list of expected deliverables and special considerations listed below.
7. An opinion on the key issues related to the implementation of the project’s objectives and expected results.
8. An explanation of the risks and assumptions affecting the execution of the project.
9. A detailed breakdown of costs of all hardware and software proposed in the submission.

Implementation of the Pilot Project

The aim of the pilot project is to showcase a comprehensive teaching and learning solution aimed to improve Literacy Skills, Numeracy Skills, and Digital Literacy Skills, amongst others, through the use of tablet computers in the Primary school sector. Further to the eligibility, selection and technical compliance, the eligible Candidates will implement the pilot project as described in Gantt chart in Annex 1. The duration of the pilot project will be 13 months.

It is within the Candidate’s responsibility to supply and implement all the necessary equipment in order to achieve the desired targets set by the same Candidate. Tablet computers must be provided to all classroom members, namely, the class students (a maximum of 30 students), the class teacher, the LSA/s and the eLearning support teacher. Another tablet of the same make and brand must be supplied to the eLearning Department to enable further assessment of the solution, the software and the hardware. Candidates must bear in mind that the tablet device will also be used by all classroom members outside the school premises and outside school hours during the duration of the
pilot project. MEDE will evaluate and accept different proposals regarding the charging of the tablet device in relation to their operation in schools and outside school hours.

Candidates are expected to identify tablet applications which target Literacy and Numeracy skills and which are aligned to the local curriculum. These applications should be included in the pilot project proposal and made available on the tablet to be used by the class members and MEDE during the implementation of the pilot project.

Support for the Maltese language must also be taken into consideration.

Training

Candidates must provide 12 hours of face-to-face training to the classroom teacher, the eLearning support teacher and officers from the eLearning Department. Training dates and time will be discussed between the Candidate and MEDE after acceptance of the proposal and in line with the timeframes indicated in the Gantt chart in Annex 1. Training should primarily focus on the technical aspect of the tablet solution, the use of the tablet solution in a classroom environment and the use of the tablet’s applications with regard to Numeracy, Literacy and Digital Skills.

The Primary School classroom infrastructure setup for the Pilot Project:

- Interactive whiteboard (provided by Starboard, Promethean or Smartboard)
- A VGA Projector
- A USB-connected Printer
- The teacher’s laptop (running on Microsoft Windows OS)
- Audio speakers
- The iLearn Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) accessible online
- e-Content in Adobe Flash format accessible online
- WiFi - Through Schools Internet - Government Network (filtered)
- A wired Internet connection (RJ45)
- Electric power points

Pilot Project’s expected Deliverables and Special Considerations:

Pedagogy

- 1:1 teaching and learning solution through the use of tablet computers in Primary classrooms
- Support to the acquisition of Numeracy, Literacy and Digital Literacy Skills
- Support of Special Educational Needs
- Support to the Primary Curriculum
- Students’ drive for learning
- Teachers’ professional development
Software

- Support for the transition from printed books to e-books including e-book authoring tools
- Accessibility for Special Educational Needs
- Curriculum content delivery software (Local curriculum alignment)
- Operating system interface, upgradability and suitability to host educational software
- Educational applications and software
- Device administration software
- Classroom management and lesson delivery system
- Internet filtering and monitoring solutions
- Compatibility with VLE and other related software used in the Primary Classroom
- Compatibility with Adobe Flash-based e-content
- Support for e-books and digital publishing

Hardware

- Processing power, memory, storage space, expandability, etc.
- Touchscreen capabilities
- Durability and ruggedness
- Battery life and charging capabilities
- Compatibility with local infrastructure in the Primary Classroom listed above
- Connectivity services: cellular (3G/4G LTE) and/or Wi-Fi
- Tracking and remote administration
- Compatibility with classroom video projector

Services

- Training on the use of hardware and software
- Help Desk/Support and maintenance of the solution for duration of the pilot project
- Online services for remote hosting, software-as-a-service, remote administration etc.
- Warranty & Insurance of hardware and software
ANNEX 1 – Gantt Chart*

*Week 1 starts on the 8th January 2014 with the publication of the Call for Proposals.
ANNEX 2 - Minimum Technical Specifications

The tablet device must meet the following minimum specifications:

**Hardware**

- between 6 and 11-inch 10-point multi-touch capacitive screen
- Resolution of 1024x600
- 1.2 GHz dual core processor
- 1GB of RAM
- 16 GB on board flash storage space
- 1 front facing and 1 rear-facing camera
- a battery that supports 5 hours of active use (inc. Internet browsing, app use, multimedia use)
- in-built accelerometer
- in-built GPS function or support for GPS
- can access Internet via Wi-Fi (standards 802.11n/ac) - may include 3G (UMTS) or 4G (LTE)
- Bluetooth 4.0
- 3.5mm headphones jack
- built-in microphone
- charging by USB and power outlet (to Maltese standard)
- rugged tablet case/glove suitable for use by minors (integrated or add-on)
- at least one protective sheet for tablet screen
- meets recognised EU safety standards and is certified as such
Software

All software proposed to be run on tablet devices must be compatible with the following operating systems: Apple iOS 7 or later; Google Android 4 or later; Microsoft Windows 8 RT/PRO or later; or equivalent.

The system must include software to manage and administer the tablet computer as follows:

- Either online via Web browser (Microsoft Internet Explorer 9 or later, Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, Safari)

OR

- Accessible via software running on either of the following operating systems: Microsoft Windows 7 or later, Apple Mac OS X 10.8 or later.