

**IMOVE/GHORFA: 3rd GERMAN-ARAB EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING FORUM
(BERLIN, 06/07 OCT 2011)**

KEYNOTE SPEECH (07 OCT 2011):

**Perspectives of German-Arab Cooperation
in the Vocational and Further Education Sector**

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The Vocational Training Sector

When the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development was established in 1961, education and training was its main instrument. Most Arab partner countries requested technical assistance to establish vocational training centres in their home countries (?) and training of trainers for these centres in Germany. For oil-rich Arab countries like Saudi-Arabia, these instruments were also provided, against full cost recovery.

Knowing that industrial productivity and growth in Germany were to a large part based on the quality of vocational training, the requests of our Arab partners were understandable. So for the most needed technical crafts like car mechanics, electricians, plumbers, carpenters and metal workers, the German curricula were copied, the training workshops were adequately equipped, and the Arab vocational training teachers were trained in Germany, and after their return to their home countries further trained by German experts.

The results in many cases were impressive: after three years of training the vocational training centres graduated highly qualified craftsmen. But there were some originally unforeseen structural problems that prevented them from applying their knowledge at full scale:

- The local employers traditionally qualified their own workers on the job, mostly for a very specific job, and consequently paid them very little money. The graduates of the state vocational training centres, after three years of extensive theoretical learning and practical training, expected much more. Many of them emigrated to the Gulf, and worked there for foreign companies.
- The local vocational training teachers, after being educated in Germany, were confronted with the salaries of the state educational system, which were not sufficient to support a family. Consequently, most of them took side jobs, opened their own businesses, or migrated, as soon as they had served their minimum period.
- The original intention in many cases was to help introduce elements of the German dual system in vocational training, i.e. including the private sector in defining learning content and sharing cost. This had worked in Germany, because of the traditional strict organization of trades, which existed from the Middle Ages. The state stepped in only in the 19th century to standardise content and structure according to the needs of the industrial revolution, which might be considered a bottom-up process. It did not work so well as a top down-approach in most of our partner countries, because most employers could not be convinced to participate.

In the age of globalization, i.e. over the last two decades, three factors called for action:

- Cheap imports from Asia swamped even the most remote markets in the hinterlands of the Arab Region, and put pressure on local industries to produce more efficiently.

- The demand for technically more sophisticated products expanded rapidly. These products could not be produced any more in remote workshops, but needed infrastructure and qualified manpower.
- Arab countries successfully tried to attract foreign investors, importing their own state-of-the-art technology, therefore creating an urgent demand for highly qualified workers.

These factors not only highlighted the importance and urgency of systematic and country-wide introduction of vocational training systems, but also made obvious the demand for the second part of my topic: further education.

The Further Education Sector

Our grandfathers, and sometimes even our fathers, could have had completed their education at the age of 20 or 25, and done a good job until their retirement. Of course their practical experience expanded over time, but not necessarily their conceptual knowledge. Our generation knows that we can no longer get away with such a “laid back”-approach, and we notice that our children even start to get nervous when product technologies do not change every year.

How is this reflected in the spectrum of German-Arab cooperation? First of all, in accordance with the governments of our partner countries, education (next to water management, economic reform and renewable energy/energy efficiency) was declared one of the four priority sectors of German development cooperation with the Arab Region. This is explained in the German government’s concept for cooperation with the Middle East and North African countries: “Foundations, Policies and Future Outlook of German Development Policy Regarding the Middle East and North Africa.” (English version: http://www.bmz.de/en/publications/type_of_publication/strategies/konzept168.pdf, Arabic Version: http://www.bmz.de/en/publications/type_of_publication/strategies/konzept171.pdf).

Details are subject to consultations and negotiations between representatives of the governments and between the implementing organizations of both sides. Let me just mention three examples of region-wide importance and accessibility:

- The Arab Digital Technical Dictionary, which is freely accessible on the internet (www.arabterm.org). It translates technical terminology in Arabic, German, English and French. In the Arab version, it can be considered as an encyclopaedia, including explanatory texts, technical drawings, and photographs, supporting self-learning of the users. So far, only one volume is accessible (automobile technology). The second volume will be added before the end of 2011 (water and wastewater technology and management); four more volumes are under way.
- Webinars, which are seminar series held by experts accessible on the internet for anyone who registers in Alumniportal Deutschland. You can either participate in real time (including a Q&A-session with the author after every lesson), or download it at any time later. Alumniportal Deutschland is a joint website by DAAD, Goethe-Institut, gtz, InWEnt and DED (the latter three now united as GIZ).
- A German-Arab double degree master program “International Education Management”, offered jointly by the University of Education Ludwigsburg and the Helwan University (www.INEMA-Master.com). This is a blended learning program for young Arab and German professionals from all segments of the education sector, supported with DAAD scholarships.

Perspectives

Promoting and financing of Arab-German cooperation in the field of education, vocational training, and further education on the German side is not exclusively the responsibility of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development any more. Not only the Foreign Office, but also the Federal Ministries of Economics and Technology, Education and Science, and Environment have been entrusted by the German Parliament with budgets for cooperation with developing countries.

So on the German side, there are not only good will and an existing concept, but also funds available for continuation and expansion of cooperation between Germany and Arab countries.

Probably the main lesson our partners and we ourselves learned from decades of cooperation (and not only in the field of education) is that development requires action on three levels:

1. **The technical level** (“micro-level”): This is the level where the reality is shaped, where you can see the change, the difference, and the results. In the educational sector, this is the field where teachers operate most of the time, where school buildings are constructed, equipped and maintained, where students and adults learn, where knowledge is applied, and bears fruit.
2. **The organizational level** (“mezzo-level”): This is the level where people consolidate their knowledge and experience (mainly gained on the technical level) to organize and coordinate the concepts and structures required to avoid chaos on the technical level. It is also on this level that they are able to control the quality of the process and the quality of the results, and to report back to the financing institutions if, and to what extent, the intended policies have been implemented. It is typical in less developed societies that this level is not very differentiated
3. **The institutional level** (“macro-level”): This is the level where the rules and regulations are discussed and decided, and the required laws, by-laws and budgets are passed. This is the level of ministries, of the parliamentary committees, and the parliaments. It is obvious that this level can only make the right decisions when it consults about its general policies with the actors on the organizational level, who, as indicated, receive their information from the technical level.

Before deciding on a cooperation project or program, we have to make sure that the problem analysis and the project strategy carefully analyze the capacities, procedures and structures on the organizational and institutional level. We also have to make sure that both sides are committed to address, formulate, and implement solutions on both of these levels.

Finally, let me mention something that from my point of view is too often overlooked. You might call it an overarching level: **The level of values**. We have to make sure that we share the same general principles, especially in the field of education. This requires discussions about the ultimate goals of education for the individual, for the social environment, and for the society as a whole. This discussion is essential for the development process, and it has to be an open and transparent one. Nevertheless, we have to face the possibility that, not even within our own societies, we will arrive at a common answer. The only common point may be that we accept the existence of several different answers, all equally valid.