

Worksheet:

Education systems, learning methods, vocational training and employability

of Graduates from Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iran, Iraq and Syria

Key questions:

1. Outline the conditions and structures in the education, training and labour market systems in the countries of origin.
2. Determine the differences to the systems in Germany.
3. Consider what typical misunderstandings may occur.

1. Similarities with the countries of origin¹

- Non-academic Training: There are only school-based vocational training programmes in the countries below, apart from training activities, partly, only for individual economic segments (e.g. occupations in healthcare and laboratory professions). They are only considered as a stopgap solution if a high school diploma or study is not possible. The training period is between one month and three years. Vocational training has been completed in 0.6% (Eritrea), 1% (Afghanistan), 5% (Iraq), 16% (pre-war Syria) and 19% (Iran) of each age cohort.
- Studies: To obtain a place to study is the goal of all high school graduates, as a university degree is the only recognized type of education and also gives the graduates high prestige in society and significantly better earnings-prospects than those without a university degree have. The study at government-run colleges is free and the families usually use all of their financial resources so that their children can study.
- Forms of Learning: Typical for the study is frontal education. There are no critical questions asked, and there are no discussions. Internships are not common, there is no orientation on the labor market. A lot has to be learned by heart during the studies and the exact reproduction of the subject matter is checked in exams. Often, the lecturers' notes are used as textbooks. Students often only know practical techniques from theory.
- Private Universities: During the past years, many private universities were founded, which do not have any admission tests, demanding a tuition of up to 5,000 US-\$ per year, and provide lower quality education than the government-funded universities. They mainly offer economics courses. In Germany, many of these institutions are not accredited as universities.

¹ Ackermann/Hülshörster 2016 a, Ackermann/Hülshörster 2016 b, Etzold/Tauermann 2016, Issa/Kohistani 2016, Mensi-Klarbach/Vedder 2017, Plickert 2016, Pulst 2015, Schenk 2015, Sicilia/ McDaniel/Kazziha 2002, Spiewak 2016, Stoewe 2017 and DAAD-Seminar 2017.

- Admission to study in Germany: Students willing to study may not be better or worse off than in their country of origin, i.e. the same criteria are applied. If you in the HKL, for example, if you have to pass an entrance examination in order to be admitted to the university, you can only take up studies in Germany if you have passed this examination in your home country. If you are allowed to study, then only certain subjects with your high school diploma in your home country, that also applies in Germany.
- Studies in Germany:
 - o As a rule, applicants to study in Germany are lacking in language and methodological knowledge (specialist and group work, papers, research) and independence. intensive support must be dedicated to those who are willing to study, so that they can begin their studies and complete them successfully.
 - o The need for support is highest among Afghan students, followed by Iraqi and Syrian ones. The educational attainment of Bachelor graduates corresponds in most cases at most to the German Abitur.
 - o For the majority of applicants, the preliminary attendance of the preparatory college makes sense. Formally, it is, e.g. mandatory for Syrians if they only achieved 60 to 69 points in the high school diploma (exception: they have already successfully studied in their home country for one year). Above 70 points they can begin their studies immediately.
 - o Admission is decided by the universities.
- Certificate Approval: Recent reports from Afghanistan and Syria can be verified on the Internet.

2. The educational system in Afghanistan

- Most students drop out of school before graduating from high school, and then have no degree. 69% of the population above age 15 are illiterate.
- Vocational training - and study options:
 - o after the 9th grade, practical vocational training
 - o After graduation: vocational training in management and administration (3 years), school training in a technical career (2-3 years), teacher education (2 years), Police academy, studies (4 years up to a Bachelor's degree)
- Access to study through a nationwide entrance examination (Kankor), annually about 400,000 applicants for 60,000 places
- Unlike in Arab countries, In addition to courses such as medicine, pharmacy and engineering, journalism and literature are also popular subjects.
- On government-funded universities, there is no tuition fee. 75% of the university budget is spent on providing students with dormitories and meals. The rest goes, for the most part, towards paying university personnel. The equipment of the universities is therefore deficient.

- Low qualification of the teaching staff: many lecturers only have a Bachelor's degree, therefore there are hardly any possibilities for earning a Master's degree or a doctorate.
- Scientists enjoy high respect and influence in society. They are expected to provide pieces of advice on problems and secure benefits for relatives and friends.
- The degrees are recognized in neighboring countries such as India, Pakistan, Iran and Tajikistan, but not in the EU and the U.S.A.

3. The education system in Eritrea³

- At the most, 70% of children are enrolled in schools.
- Two-year secondary school with two fields (economic and scientific) and military training.
- Graduation after the 12th grade. The 12th. grade can only be completed at the High School in Sava.
- Admission to universities takes place through an admissions exam. Those who do not do very well must complete a two-year vocational training at the National Center for Vocational Training (CEVOT) in Sava, which is affiliated to the Military. One can become a primary school teacher after a one-year course.
- The military service must be performed before you start your studies. It officially lasts 18 months, but is often extended indefinitely.
- Master programmes only became available recently.
- There are many evening- and distant-learning courses offered.
- Frontal teaching is usual, and for some time modern teaching and exam forms have been promoted.

4. The educational system in Iraq⁴

- Access to the secondary level through an admission exam
- Advanced with literature and nature science-technical branch.
- The natural science branch has a much higher prestige.
- In the literature branch, one no longer has mathematics lessons.
- Higher education access via graduation note
- Social recognition and good salary prospects are only available to graduates in science and technology (medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, engineering and science). Almost all applicants seek to study in such areas.
- Some of these subjects are taught in English. Only 36% of teachers have a doctorate.
- Access to master and doctoral studies is only possible with very good grades (90% of the points).
- Permeability between vocational and university education

³ Etzold/Tauermann 2016, Stoewe 2017.

⁴ Ackermann/Hülshörster 2016 a, DAAD-Seminar 2017.

5. The educational system and the labour market in Iran⁵

- High school with the branches Social Sciences, Natural Sciences, Mathematics-Physics and Literature⁶
- "[Alexander] Haridi [from DAAD]: 'Iran has a very performance-based, transparent education system, there is a national high school diploma and central admission exams for the universities. The best universities are those ran by the government, these have a very strict limit to how many students they admit, and only take the highest ranking 10 % of a cohort.' TIME: 'Where do the other 90 percent end up?' Haridi: 'At private institutions' [...] TIME: 'How do graduates get on the job market?' Haridi: 'That's a big problem: a great education system, but it does not lead to a career. The connection between university and enterprise, the transition to work, that's what Iranians want to learn from Germany.' "⁷

6. Education system in Syria⁸

- The education system guides students without many choices from school entry to graduation. As at middle school, many students drop out, but then have only a perspective as unskilled assistants, if they can not get into the parent's business, or similar.
- There is no career guidance or advice.
- The senior grades (11th and 12th grade) have a literature-Arts and humanities and a Mathematics-nature sciences branch.
- The nature sciences branch enjoys a significantly higher prestige.
- There are no choices: Those who have good grades at the end of the junior high school have to attend the nature science branch, the remainder have to attend the literature class.
- In the literature branch, one no longer has instruction in Mathematics and nature sciences in the upper (senior) level.
- After graduation, with a nature science high school diploma, you have a free choice of studies; however, with a literature high school diploma, you can only pursue university studies in humanities and social sciences.
- Only graduates of scientific and technical subjects enjoy social recognition and good salary. Almost all students aspire to study in such subjects.
- There are no studies exploring the labour market demands, and therefore, no idea, either, about the concept of non-academic training programs.
- Every student candidate gets a place. The annual tuition fee is approx. 30 US \$.

⁵ https://www.imove-germany.de/cps/rde/xchg/imove_projekt_de/hs.xsl/alle_news.htm?content-url=/cps/rde/xchg/imove_projekt_de/hs.xsl/Iran-Aktuelles-zum-neuen-Berufsbildungsgesetz.htm, 01.02.2018, 14:45.

⁶ Toulany/Orthmann, 2013, p. 102.

⁷ Schenk, 2015.

⁸ Ackermann/Hülshörster, 2016 b, Sicilia/McDaniel/Kazziha 2002, DAAD-Seminar 2017.

- The distribution of study places takes place via the grade shown on the high school diploma. Therefore, the universities are overcrowded and the "NC" for popular subjects is constantly increasing. For the most sought-after study, medicine at the University of Damascus, e.g. In 2007, one needed to achieve 96.7% of the possible points.
- The largest German universities, the universities of Cologne, Munich, Hamburg and Münster, have between 40,000 and 46,000 students, the University of Aleppo 60,000, the University of Damascus 85,000.
- The high school diploma exam can be repeated to improve grades.
- A change of major is not possible.
- Access to master and doctoral studies is only possible with very good grades (90% of the points).
- Before the war, the state sent students abroad for Master's and doctoral programmes, with scholarships.
- For financial reasons, lecturers often pursue other occupations and have little time to dedicate to the students.
- There are hardly any continued education opportunities for working people, no permeability between vocational and university education.

7. Education system, learning methods and practical orientation in various countries of the Middle East

- "[Reiner] Klingholz [Director of the Berlin-Institute]: 'The rates of formal qualifications have improved significantly in recent decades. The educational content, however, remains poor. Although most children attend [...] a school. However, many do not learn reading, arithmetic and problem-solving skills there.' TIME: 'This backlog was officially known in 2002, when the United Nations published the first *Arab Human Development Report*. How did the affected states react?' Klingholz: 'The report should have been a wake-up call for the Arab world, such as the Sputnik shock for the US or the Pisa report for Germany. But the opposite happened. The report was massively criticized, belittled and discontinued after five issues.'"⁹
- Business Informatics Professor Edda Pulst: "The first time I visited an Islamic country professionally was in 2004 [...] Since then, I have visited more than 100 universities between Tehran and Agadir. Almost always, there is a lack of technical infrastructure. On the other hand, the libraries are well equipped and the students read a lot. [...] Passive learning, the pure recording and reproduction of information, is the strength of all students from Iran to Morocco. [...] Oral presentations are extremely unpopular [...] Uneasiness [...] creates the invitation to a direct conversation. [...] The reluctance to confront one's opponent with one's own ideas proves to be an obstacle. It takes a long time to reduce such fears of contact. Every request to write a learned topic, on the other hand, will be followed willingly, precisely and quickly. A major hurdle is

⁹ Spiewak 2016.

group work, and it is unimaginable for students to contact companies directly. But if you bring the industry representatives with you to the university, they will bombard them with questions and their boundless desire to learn something about the outside world."¹⁰

8. The employability of university graduates

- "From the southern Mediterranean to Iran, there are 350 million people under the age of 30. If there is to be a future for these people beyond terrorism, then only in a developed domestic labour market. Its prerequisites are functioning educational institutions. However, those are hardly available, thus far. It is true that start-ups of universities, training centres and educational institutions have led to an explosion of graduates in the Arab world. However, even local experts doubt that the quality of university education meets the needs of the economy. One part of the graduates perished in the bureaucratic jungle of government authorities, companies and ministries. The other part lands as low wage labourer, on the street. [...] The higher the professional qualification, the higher the unemployment rate. And the gap between what the labour market needs and what the universities in the region are delivering is getting bigger. [...] The governments in Oman, Libya and Saudi Arabia are trying to use quotas. They force foreign investors to hire domestic employees. The companies hire and pay such quota employee and did not let them work, by any means."¹¹

"On paper, some North African and Arab countries have higher education attainment levels. 'The quality of the degrees is very poor,' says [Reiner] Klingholz [Director of the Berlin Institute]. In international comparative exams, such as the Pisa study or the Tims-Maths study, Africa and Arabia are far below, emphasizes [Gunnar] Heinsohn [lecturer at the NATO Defense College in Rome]. The young people would also study the wrong subjects, too much social sciences and too little technical-mathematical-scientific topics, criticises the Berlin Institute. Many graduates were hoping for a job in the bloated government administration, while the private sector remains weak."¹²

9. Experience reports on career choice and training

- Ranjit Khan, 23 years old: He quit school in India shortly before graduating from high school because his parents sent him to Germany. In Hesse he was promised a training position to become a heating technician, but no work permit. Therefore, he completed a school education as a Social Assistant. After that, he was once again denied a work permit. Then he applied in Lower Saxony for a training position as Hotel Manager, which he received and was allowed to start. But his real career aspiration is different: "I feel very well looked after in training, but my wish is to work as a Police officer at some point. In India, it was my dream to work as a Police officer. Unfortunately, there is a lot of corruption in India and I can not accept that. [...] After my arrival in

¹⁰ Pulst 2015.

¹¹ Pulst 2015.

¹² Plickert 2016.

Germany, I did not even inquire whether I could finish [...] my specialist high school diploma here. I just did what I was told to do, in order to be able to stay. I have already inquired about the requirements to become a police officer. I need a permanent residence permit for that and at the moment I have only for a limited time. [...] It would even be an advantage for me to speak several languages."¹³

- Mohamed, 29 years old: "There [in Aleppo] I have studied six semester at Law School. [...] Actually, I wanted to become a judge. [...] I really wanted to study [in Germany], but somehow that would have taken so long and then I tried to figure out what I want to do for a job, because there are so many different professions. [...] There are thousands of professions here. [...] We spent a month [in the framework of a measure by the Chamber of Crafts for vocational orientation] doing various internships in different companies for a month to try different professions. I worked as the painter, in a metal and wood workshop. Then I was asked what kind of training I would like to do. I responded that I would like to work as a dental technician or an optician." *How did you come up with these professions?* I have realized that I like to work with small things and then the supervisors at the Chamber of Crafts have advised me accordingly, and also told me that these jobs are always going to be needed. [...] it then worked out with the training place in the Fielmann store in L." *Law and optics, these two occupational fields, aren't they actually quite far apart?* "Yes, that's true, but I realized that I enjoy working with fine things, with my hands." [...] After the apprenticeship I would like to get my Master's degree or study. There is also the opportunity to study within the company, they offer a lot. Let's see what happens. [...] *What makes working in Syria different from working in Germany [...]*? „ [...] In Syria there is no vocational training, like here in Germany. You just go somewhere and work. Here in Germany you can of course work without training, but then the work is not so good and is then paid poorly. [...] I would like to support my family in [...] Syria, but of course I can not, I earn too little for that. I only get a little more than before from the Job Centre, that is 470 Euro. [...] my parents are glad that I am here [...] They are very proud of me for making it on my own, here."¹⁴
- Rasif, 30 years old, married and father of two children, has a law degree in Syria and worked in the Tax Office. In Germany, his degree was recognized as a Bachelor's degree. He applied for a place in business administration and an apprenticeship as an insurance salesman, which he then took on: "The apprenticeship lasts 2.5 years. My employer is a very good company and I could earn quite well there, after completing my training. [...] One will be offered a position, at the end of the training. [...] If I start with the training almost from scratch, it will still be better than just studying. I already have a recognized degree [...]. What I miss is experience in the German labour market. I just collect them on the short way', i.e. during the vocational training. And through my company I have the feeling that there is a future. Everyone in my depart-

¹³ Mensi-Klarbach/Vedder, 2017, p. 71-73.

¹⁴ Mensi-Klarbach/Vedder 2017, p. 75-81.

ment, except my boss, has only one education. I think I have a lot of chances there with my Bachelor's degree. [...] I talked to them about what they would like me to do: 'A dual course of study? A Vocational training? I am ready!' After my apprenticeship I have the opportunity to continue my education there."¹⁵

- Vian M., 44 years old, Primary school teacher from Iraq: "What I noticed here in Germany, I experienced and saw in my children's school. From enrollment, from the beginning to the end. The children are told by teachers or parents: every person has a goal and must achieve it. Without a goal, it does not work. But that's not the case with us. The main thing is that I get a degree. No matter what. For example, there are many young students who want to volunteer after graduation. But they are not allowed to do that. Because the parents do not want that. They want them to enroll in the medical school. Then they have to study what their parents want them to. If the parents are physicians, the children must also become physicians. If the parents are engineers or architects, the children have to follow the same route. On the one hand, I think that's nice, on the other hand, every person has his own feelings. Maybe parents enjoy being physicians, but the children do not. "¹⁶
- Amir Tadres, 32 years old, is currently completing an apprenticeship as an instructor for first aid courses and is working as an interpreter in a refugee camp: "At a technical and industrial secondary school I learned the system, maintenance and repair of electrical appliances for three years and left the school with a diploma that is comparable with the German high school diploma. This was followed by a 13-week certification to train managers in the electricity and electrical distribution industry. [...] I was looking to find my first employment in Cairo. I wanted to work as an appliance technician. But almost one year later, I was still without a job. Although they have something like a job agency, I never thought of going there because I do not know an Egyptian who went there or is going there. There, you have to wait endlessly and do not know if you get a job in the end. So when I was looking for a job, I preferred to rely on my friends [...] and applied to work in a big factory that embroidered curtains and other fabrics. In the factory, I personally submitted my application and was hired as a machine operator, on the spot. I did not need to do any training for that. I was trained for six months; this is called in Egypt an internship. [...] The internship can not be compared to one in Germany, where you have to learn a lot more. You also get no certification of what you have learned and worked on, during the internship." [...] *What are the biggest differences between working in Germany and in Egypt?* "In the beginning I had to learn to be punctual, because that is very important in Germany; that was a bit hard for me. [...] I like the working life here better than in Egypt. My working hours are good, and I have a lot of vacation time. In my company in Egypt, I never had any vacation because I worked shift. Anyone who works 12 hours and has 36 hours off, is not entitled to vacation. The way vacation is handled in Egypt is very arbitrary. Each company

¹⁵ as well as p. 83-87.

¹⁶ Mensi-Klarbach/Vedder, 2017, p. 123-124.

has its own vacation rules. There are companies with only eight hours workdays, which are mostly authorities, and there are probably vacation days. Private companies always decide individually whether they give you vacation or not. " [...] *What are your plans for the future?*" [I am] wondering if I accept the paramedic training offered to me by the Maltese, or if I am to study Social Pedagogy. [...] With a vocational training or a degree you get a good job and earn better than in Egypt. My biggest wish for the future is [...] to begin and complete my studies. Then I would like to get a secure job, as my wife [trained seamstress], who now has an apprenticeship as an office clerk, has already passed her intermediate examination and will be done in no later than eight months. After that, she will have a secure job at the company, where she started with a half-time job as a seamstress and where she is now in training. That is how I think it will go."¹⁷

- Tahsin Tozo, 30 years old: "The system of dual education is unknown to most people coming to Germany from abroad. In Syria, for example, one learns either a solely academic job skill, or a solely company-based one. In the case of purely company-based training, the company independently assumes responsibility, there are no training regulations.

How do you assess the starting of a career in the economy? Are there enough companies that want to employ refugees?

Our company survey conducted last year showed that there is a high demand in the hotel and restaurant industry. However, it is my opinion that the young refugees are less interested in this area. Most are interested in the commercial, metalworking or craft sector. In these areas, we have demand from companies, too, but not to the extent as in the hotel- and restaurant industry. The young refugees always decide under the impression of what they know from their homeland. And that's where gastronomy often does not fare that well; the work as a cook is in Syria, for example, is not a particularly desirable activity. It is therefore important to point out, again and again, during career counselling that in Germany, all vocational training programmes are regulated and thus one acquires a qualified, recognized degree with which one also has real employment opportunities. It is also important to explain the job descriptions in detail. This could happen in the language learning classes of the vocational schools, but also quite specifically, during vocational career guidance. Career orientation takes time.

The parents of the young refugees who live in the homeland often influence the career choices of their children even from a long distance. Especially in the Syrian culture, the opinion of the parents plays a major role. And that's what parents do, without knowing the prerequisites and existing conditions here in Germany.

It takes patience to learn the language, and with integration, one has to be patient - everything takes its time. Without qualifications and training, it is difficult to integrate into the German labour market. Anyone who does not bring such prerequisites and

¹⁷ Mensi-Klarbach/Vedder, 2017, p. 151-152, p. 160-162.

does not want to acquire them, will only be able to work in Germany as a temporary employee or at the lowest level, with a correspondingly low income. Therefore, the best way for a successful start in Germany is usually, with a vocational training. "¹⁸

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¹⁸ Mensi-Klarbach/Vedder, 2017, p. 205, p. 210-211.