

Chances and Challenges of Egyptian-German Cooperation in Higher Education

Yüksek Eğitimde Alman-Mısır İşbirliğinin Şansı ve Zorlukları

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Abstract

Egypt and Germany share a long history when it comes to cultural diplomacy in general and bilateral cooperation in higher education in particular, with Germany being the second most important partner in academic exchange after the US. The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) therefore plays an important role as an actor on-site promoting several projects and scholarship programs to support Egyptian Academia and increase the quality of teaching. At the same time DAAD is a careful observer of trends and developments within the Egyptian higher education system. The main focus here lies with the promotion of German as a Foreign Language, decidedly one of the cornerstones of DAAD's work not only in Egypt but worldwide. This double position as actor and observer enables DAAD to provide meaningful data on recent developments within the Egyptian academia. Therefore, it gives answers to questions about its main challenges and their impact on higher education in general and the teaching of German as a Foreign Language in particular. It also provides proof of the relevance of bilateral cooperation in higher education and classifies the quality and effectiveness of academic relations between both countries. The article aims to presents and discuss these findings by using qualitative content analysis as a tool to analyze data provided in the official reports of DAAD on Egypt between the years of 2016 to 2020.

Keywords: Academic exchange, higher education cooperation, Egypt, Germany, German as a Foreign Language

Öz

Mısır ve Almanya, genelde kültürel diplomasiye ve özel olarak yükseköğretimde ikili iş birliği söz konusu olduğunda uzun bir geçmişe sahiptir; Almanya, ABD'den sonra akademik değişimde ikinci en önemli ortaktır. Bu nedenle Alman Akademik Değişim Servisi (DAAD), Mısır Akademisi'ni

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desteklemek ve öğretim kalitesini artırmak için çeşitli projeler ve burs programlarını teşvik etmede bir aktör olarak önemli bir rol oynar. Aynı zamanda Mısır'daki eğilimler ve gelişmelerin dikkatli bir gözlemcisi olur. Buradaki ana odak noktası, Almanca'nın yabancı bir dil olarak tanıtılmasıdır; bu kesinlikle DAAD'nin sadece Mısır'da değil, dünya çapında işinin temel taşlarından biridir. Aktör ve gözlemci olarak bu ikili konum, DAAD'nin Mısır akademisindeki son gelişmeler hakkında anlamlı veriler sağlamasına olanak tanır. Böylece bu veriler temel zorlukları, genel olarak yükseköğrenim üzerindeki etkileri ve özellikle de Almanca'nın Yabancı Dil olarak öğretimi hakkındaki sorulara cevaplar verir. Aynı zamanda, yükseköğretimde ikili iş birliğinin uygunluğunun kanıtını sağlar ve her iki ülke arasındaki akademik ilişkilerin kalitesini ve etkililiğini sınıflandırır. Bu makale, bu bulguları, DAAD'nin 2016-2020 yılları arasında Mısır hakkındaki resmi raporlarında sunulan verileri nitel içerik analiz yöntemini kullanarak, ortaya çıkan bilgileri değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Akademik değişim, yükseköğretimde iş birliği, Mısır, Almanya, yabancı dil olarak Almanca

Introduction

Egypt and Germany share a long history when it comes to cultural diplomacy in general and bilateral cooperation in higher education in particular, with Germany being the second most important partner in academic exchange after the US. The German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), as an association of German institutions of higher education with close ties to the German Foreign Ministry and a vast network of international academic personal and projects, plays an important role in establishing bilateral relations in education. In the case of Egypt, cooperation between DAAD and Egyptian universities dates back to the 1950s, when the first DAAD office was established in Cairo. Since then academic cooperation between both countries has been a steady component of German-Egyptian relations in general. Meanwhile, the number of German-learners in Egypt has been on the rise for years; 405.262 schoolchildren and university students are currently learning German as a foreign language; an increase of 60 percent compared to 2015. Thirty-six universities in Egypt are offering studies in German, 18.974 students are currently learning German as part of their curriculum (Auswärtiges Amt, 2020a, p.11). While this development creates new demand for qualified German teachers, the conditions for studying German Studies or German as a Foreign Language at a majority of Egyptian universities, are still far from optimal.¹

1 This article will use the term *German Studies* as a translation of the German *Germanistik* and German as a Foreign Language for the term *Deutsch als Fremdsprache* (DaF). However, specific university programs might have their own terms. In general, these disciplines are not as strictly separated in Egypt as they are for example in Germany. German Studies are way more common than German as a Foreign Language and may also lead to a teaching position after graduating.

The present analysis aims to shed a light on current conditions and future challenges of higher education in Egypt, with a special focus on the subjects of German Studies and German as a Foreign Language, as these present a cornerstone within the academic cooperation between both countries. It'll discuss the quality and effectiveness of academic exchange between Egypt and Germany by posing the question of how these topics are presented within the yearly reports of DAAD as the main actor of bilateral higher education cooperation on-site.²

In this context, it is crucial to first take a look at Germany's foreign culture and education policy in general in order to understand its attempts to promote German as an internationally recognized language of science and to strengthen its own position in the realm of international academia. The second aspect of this article will then provide general information on the facts and figures of studying German in Egypt and present the most important bilateral projects and cooperation. The following analysis aims to answer immanent questions on the chances and challenges of Egypt's higher education system and academic cooperation between both countries, by using qualitative content analysis as a tool to analyze data provided in the official reports of DAAD on Egypt between the years of 2016 to 2020.

Research design

Status of research

The topic of Germany's foreign culture and education policy with a special focus on language is a relatively well-researched field with important contributions being made by political science expert and ex-diplomat Werner Wnendt in his article *Auswärtige Kultur – und Bildungspolitik und die deutsche Sprache* (Foreign Culture and Education Politics and the German Language) that connects the dots between decision making on a political scale and its impact on educational cooperation and the promotion of German as an international language of science (Wnendt, 2008). Scientific research conducted by experts like Sylwia Adamczak-Krysztofowicz, Sabine Jentgens, Antje Stork, or Helmut Glück meanwhile draws closer attention to the role German as a Foreign Language plays in the international context, with Glück also providing an historic overview on the subject's establishing process (Adamczak-Krysztofowicz, Jentgens and Stork, 2014; Glück, 2014). Ulrich Ammons and Gabriele Schmidts *Förderung der Deutschen Sprache Weltweit. Vorschläge, Ansätze und Konzepte* (Worldwide Promotion of the German Language. Suggestions, Approaches and Concepts) takes a more practical approach to the topic, with a range of articles providing examples from various teaching locations in the world and different theoretical concepts (Ammons and Schmidt, 2019).

2 The analysis includes DAAD reports from 2016 till 2020. After the 2011 revolution, Egypt underwent major political changes and a time of instability and political unrest. With president Abdel Fatah al-Sisi gaining power in June 2014, a phase of consolidation started, leading to considerable stabilization in the following years. 2016 marks a valid starting point for the present analysis as the following years are comparable in the sense that no major political disruptions happened.

Information on the Egyptian education system with a focus on higher education and academic cooperation especially in the field of German Studies can be found not only in the mentioned DAAD-reports and similar accounts by the Goethe Institutes on-site, but also in relevant published research literature such as Ulrike Arras' *Germanistik an der Universität Al-Azhar in Kairo* (German Studies at Al-Azhar University in Cairo), while research conducted by Simone Jores, Hendrik Lux, Dalia Shalaby and Sebastian Vötter gives a detailed account of the situation of German as a Foreign Language in Egypt, describing important institutions and actors as well as upcoming challenges such as a lack of qualified German teachers (Arras, 2001; Jores, Lux, Shalaby and Vötter, 2019). In addition, as mentioned above, DAAD-reports on Egypt provide reliable facts and figures as well as meaningful data on recent developments within the Egyptian academia and bilateral cooperation.

Methodology of data analysis

The present research uses basics and techniques of qualitative content analysis to analyze relevant reports on the conditions of education in Egyptian universities and the quality and functionality of academic relations between Egypt and Germany. As Mayring explains in his groundwork on qualitative content analysis, the method provides an interpretative approach to recognize latent structures of meaning and is a sufficient tool when it comes to analyzing linguistic material instead of hard data (Mayring, 2015, p.9). While textual material such as protocols and reports normally tends to be analyzed by a rather free approach of interpretation, Mayring offers a structured way of evaluating complex textual data by establishing clear rules of interpretation (Mayring, 2015, p.10). One of the most important aspects in this context is Mayring's demand, that each attempt to analyze complex textual data should be led by categories that can either be deductive or inductive depending on material and research question. Evaluation and interpretation of the elaborated results might then focus on aspects like frequency, valence, intensity or contingency (Mayring, 2015, p.13ff.).

Material samples

Material samples are gathered from official reports conducted by the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) in Egypt between the years of 2016 and 2020. Each report comprising around 30 pages of information on the Egyptian population and economy, facts and figures on (higher) education and academic exchange with Germany as well as an account of DAADs activities on-site.

Instruments of data collection

Data on higher education in Egypt and bilateral cooperation between Germany and Egypt as presented in the mentioned documents are gathered by surveys and interviews conducted by the intermediary organizations on-site, especially DAADs representatives in Egypt and their associates at Egyptian universities and in official institutions concerned with higher education. The reports are subsequently accessible to a wider audience online or on-demand.

Data analysis

The present analysis follows a structured approach to filter out relevant aspects and assesses the material based on certain criteria (Mayring, 2015, p.67). Therefore the predetermined classification

criteria was set as category 1 “Statements on the quality of teaching and studying in higher education in Egyptian universities” and category 2 “Statements on bilateral cooperation in higher education between Egypt and Germany”. Subcategories were established by an inductive formation of categories while evaluating the material in a first step and then reevaluated and fixed as a coding guide. Category 1 was itemized into 7 subcategories named A-G focusing on (A) student numbers, (B) funding and equipment, (C) educational level of university teachers, (D) political interventions, (E) practical relevance of studies, (F) salary of university teachers and (G) curricula and didactics. Category 2 gathered statements on the quality and effectiveness of bilateral cooperation in higher education between both countries without being further itemized into subcategories. Within the subcategories of 1A-G and the category 2 statements were organized in accordance with them being either “positive”, “neutral” or “negative” with each classification using a set of keywords such as “deficiency, desolate, underdeveloped, bad, unattractive, massive challenges, limited, difficult, uncertain” (negative) or “good, impressive, well established, problem-free, friendly, application-oriented, successful” (positive) while neutral referred to statements using neither positive nor negative keywords or balancing each other out, but still present valid statements according to the established research criteria. Keywords were then supplemented by additional data examples used as anchors to establish a reliable coding guide. Statements were interpreted in accordance with the frequency of their appearance in the reports and their classification as positive, negative, or neutral. Results of data analysis will be presented and validated under “Findings and discussion” (5).

Germany’s cultural and educational policy and the relevance of language

Cultural and educational policy is and has been for a considerable amount of time a cornerstone of German foreign politics. In his above-mentioned analysis Wnendt strongly emphasizes the importance of establishing international relations based on culture and education by saying that these strategies are not only one of the most valuable instruments of German foreign policy but also a core investment into the republic’s future (Wnendt, 2008, p.448).

Reliable cultural and educational relations between two nations function as a kind of “swimming in front of the wave” as Wnendt describes it, meaning that the establishment of meaningful, long-term relations in these fields do have the power to overcome misunderstandings and prejudices and reduce the risks of political conflicts before they may occur. While culture and education can never truly be completely detached from politics, they still have a mind on their own and therefore the ability to open and access spaces, where politics no longer can enter.

Culture must be allowed to do things and be allowed to speak to its audience in a way that may not always correspond directly to the wishes and ideas of politics. Only then can it develop its specific effect in favor of foreign policy (Wnendt, 2008, p.450).³

3 „Kultur muss Dinge tun dürfen und auf eine Art und Weise zu ihrem Publikum sprechen dürfen, die vielleicht nicht immer direkt den Wünschen und Vorstellungen der Politik entspricht. Nur dann kann sie ihre spezifische Wirkung auch zugunsten der Außenpolitik entfalten“ (Wnendt, 2008, p.450).

Specific effect here not only refers to the ability of diminishing conflicts, it also puts emphasis on the fact that an effective cultural and educational infrastructure is an important requirement of any functioning society and therefore a necessary part of any development policy aiming to strengthen an international partner. With regards to Germany itself, these cooperation and relations not only provide mental input to an academic and/or cultural community that might otherwise start spinning around itself in a non-productive way, but also ensure the country's reputation as an internationally recognized science location (Wnendt, 2008, p.450).

Within the context of cultural and educational policy, cooperation in higher education plays a particularly important role. Even though not an English-speaking country, Germany is still a key location for international students and has been so for decades, with Glück even mentioning the fact that about a hundred years ago, every second international student worldwide was enrolled at a German university (Glück, 2004, p.583). While clearly the above-mentioned benefits of cultural and educational relations also refer to any kind of academic relations between two countries, international cooperation in higher education enables a number of additional advantages. Adamczak-Krysztofowicz et.al. mention the benefits of international academic cooperation not so much in accordance with high-profile bilateral research projects, but its positive effects on didactic developments. By having a very direct impact on students and teachers, academic exchange and bilateral cooperation in higher education influence the way of teaching and learning, give way to new methods and content, and strengthen intercultural competencies (Adamczak-Krysztofowicz et.al., 2014, p.490).

Language undoubtedly plays a fundamental role in this context. In order to attend joint programs or even teach or study in a transnational institution, staff and students likewise need to obtain a professional level in the common language. This creates a need to provide sufficient foreign language education, especially in the case of German which is after all not a regular subject in most primary education systems. Transnational higher education institutions like the Turkish-German University in Istanbul aim to meet this necessity with a structured curriculum that provides complementary language classes in accordance with the actual studies, exercising a strong focus on professional language competence (Koreik and Uzuntaş, 2014, p.10).

From this point of view, the promotion of German as a Foreign Language abroad can be described as being purpose and aim at the same time. As the majority of common academic projects and programs abroad center around the subjects of German as a Foreign Language or German Studies taught and studied at universities all over the world, improving the language sufficiency level of students and teachers on-site poses one of the main tasks in higher education cooperation. At the same time, promoting the German language abroad and thus strengthening its position as an internationally acknowledged language of science is part of the political agenda and therefore met with considerable financial and personal effort. As Wnendt confirms: "The coalition agreement defines the promotion of the German language as a focus of foreign cultural and educational policy and emphasizes that the German language should be given appropriate consideration in accordance with its importance in Europe"⁴ (Wnendt 2008, p.446). With English undoubtedly being the most

4 Der Koalitionsvertrag definiert die Förderung von Deutsch als einen Schwerpunkt der Auswärtigen Kultur

important and widespread language when it comes to international academia, Germany tries to establish solid grounds for promoting its own language as an adequate alternative. In order to do so, supporting and maintaining academic fields concerned with German language and literature abroad are fundamental tasks in German cultural and educational policy (Ammon, 2019, p.8).

German-Egyptian cooperation in higher education: Facts and figures

Compared to other countries, the interest in learning German in Egypt is generally high, with numbers constantly rising during the last years. Parents consider German a favorable option in their children's education, therefore German schools and schools offering at least part of their curriculum in German are in high demand. The number of schoolchildren in Egypt learning German saw an increase from 229.420 children and young adults in 2015 to 371.432 in 2020. (Auswärtiges Amt, 2020a, p.42).

Overall Egypt hosts 7 German schools abroad, located in Cairo, Alexandria and Hurghada. These institutions offer the opportunity of gaining qualifications recognized in Germany and thus, offer easy access to German universities, but require a financial commitment, that is not accessible to most Egyptians. Apart from the official German schools abroad Egypt also has five schools that offer the DSD (German language diploma) while operating on an Egyptian curriculum and 19 Fit-Schools which teach the Egyptian curriculum but have a special focus on German as a foreign language. These institutions are all part of the so-called "Schools. Partner of the Future-Network" (PASCH), an initiative of the German Foreign Ministry that offers professional support and resources to its members and promotes a bilateral exchange in school education (Pasch-Initiative, 2020).

The fact that such a large number of Egyptian children are engaged with the German language from an early age on and thus familiar with German culture and the German education system is one of the leading factors why German as a Foreign Language and German Studies are popular subjects at Egyptian universities.

From an academic point of view, Egypt takes a leading position within the MENA-region as it is home to some of the biggest and most prestigious universities in the Arab world, such as the famous al-Azhar University. Currently, 26 state universities, 23 private universities, and 5 so-called "national non-profit" universities host 2.9 million students, numbers are expected to rise to 3.5 million by 2030 (Arras, 2001; DAAD, 2019, p.3). Currently, German is studied at 36 universities in Egypt by 18.974 students including those who take complementary German classes. German Studies programs are offered at 24 departments of Egyptian universities with 4000 students being currently enrolled. Some of those programs such as those at the Helwan-University and Ain-Shams-University in Cairo also offer a teaching degree (Auswärtiges Amt, 2020a, p.43; Tahoun, 2019, p.2).

The will to establish and secure academic standards has led to noticeable efforts within the field of internationalization of Egyptian universities during the last years. Already in 2014 President al-Sisi

– und Bildungspolitik und betont, dass die Stellung der deutschen Sprache in Europa ihrer Bedeutung nach angemessene Berücksichtigung finden soll (Wnendt, 2008, p.446).

called for a 50 percent increase of Egyptians studying and doing research abroad and supported the nationwide establishment of international offices coordinating international exchange at Egyptian universities. In the course of these events, Egypt was and still is also relying on international support, with Germany playing an important role (DAAD, 2016, p.23f). For example, the German Research Association (DFG) was involved in establishing the Egyptian Science and Technology Development Fund (STDF) that is funding scientific research, projects, papers, partnerships etc., while the first private university in Egypt following German academic standards and structures – The German University Cairo (GUC) – was already opened in 2003 (DAAD, 2016, p.24). Following the general idea of the GUC, the German International University of Applied Science (GIU) as a new bilateral project is emerging in Cairo's New Administrative Capital right now, offering industry-focused Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in different specializations (GIU, 2020). One should keep in mind though, that these are private universities with high tuition fees that are not accessible to the vast majority of Egyptians. It is therefore safe to say that they represent fairly elite projects whose attempts to improve academic standards and implement practical approaches are definitely right but will probably not have a bigger impact on Egyptian academia in general.

The binational Master program *Deutsch als Fremdsprache im arabisch-deutschen Kontext* (German as a Foreign language in an Arab-German Context) of Ain-Shams-University in Cairo and the University of Leipzig in Germany on the other hand offers excellent study conditions while still being located at public institutions and therefore accessible to everyone holding a bachelor degree in German Studies, German as a Foreign language or related fields. The program is a shared project of the Herder-Institute at Leipzig University and the Center of Excellence for Studies and Research in German and Arabic as Foreign Languages at the Faculty of Education of Ain-Shams-University Cairo, financed by the Egyptian state and the German Foreign Ministry and supported by DAAD (Herder Institut, 2020a).

The binational master is without a doubt one of the flagships of Egyptian-German cooperation in higher education and successfully in place since 2008. Twelve years is a relatively short time in light of DAAD's general history in Egypt considering that DAAD's main office in Cairo, which is responsible not only for Egypt by also for Sudan, opened its doors in 1960. By this time German-Egyptian academic exchange had already started to flourish with 1900 Egyptians studying in Germany. During the following decades, DAAD Egypt managed to realize a huge number of events, projects, and funding. One of the most important events was without a doubt the *Deutsch-Ägyptisches Wissenschaftsjahr* (German Egyptian Year of Science) in 2017 during which several co-financed long-term academic programs were put into place. 2017 also saw the launch of the COSIMENA-Project (Clusters of Scientific Innovation in the Middle East and North Africa), a cooperation between DAAD and several representatives of German academic stakeholders on-site, financed by the German Foreign Ministry (DAAD, 2018, p.6; DAAD, 2019, p.6).

Several scholarship programs for Egyptian students are currently in place, the most popular being the so-called "Hochschulsummerkurs-Stipendium" (Summer School Scholarships) for students enrolled in a Bachelor's program. On step further in their academic career young Egyptian academics have the opportunity to apply for a short-term (German Egyptian Research Short term

Scholarship, GERSS) or long-term (German Egyptian Research Long term Scholarship, GERLS) scholarship for studying and doing research in Germany. Since 2017 the program is co-financed by the Egyptian government that takes up 50 percent of the GERSS-costs and 70 percent of GERLS. In 2019 35 new GERLS – and 24 new GERSS-scholarships were granted. Overall 1.672 Egyptian students and scientists were able to study, teach or do research in Germany, while 399 German students and scientists were able to do the same in Egypt (DAAD, 2019, p.8ff.).

Findings and Discussion

Statements on chances and challenges of Egypt's higher education system

The analysis of statements made in the DAAD-reports between the years of 2016 and 2020 concerning the quality of education in Egyptian universities clearly points to a more negative assessment. On altogether 82 statements referring to the above-mentioned aspects of teaching and studying, 59 can be classified as negative, 15 as neutral, and only eight as positive with no noticeable changes in distribution over the years.

Most statements fulfilling the set criteria were made in reference to subcategory D (political interventions), which is of little surprise considering the fact that DAAD is after all a policymaker within the region, with great interest in political decisions and developments especially if they concern the higher education system. Political decisions in this context may have a direct impact on academic cooperation as they affect bilateral research and study projects, especially flagship projects like the binational Master's programs at Ain-Shams-University or the German University of Cairo. The 14 statements in this subcategory that were classified as negative strongly focus on the fact that the Egyptian educational system is highly centralized, leaving very little autonomy to the universities. Furthermore, the state-led recruitment system is described as non-transparent and not generally based on academic achievements (DAAD, 2016, p.17; DAAD, 2018, p.3; DAAD, 2019, p.3; DAAD, 2020, p.3). The 2017 report adds that academic freedom is not a given in Egypt and that the humanities are particularly affected as their subjects require critical thinking and discussion (DAAD 2017, p.10). Compared to the other subcategories, D also offers more neutral statements (the proportion being 14 negative to 10 neutral on all reports), which can be accounted to the fact that they provide information on state-reforms within the higher education sector, that might improve the system but are not yet effectively in place. Following up on these kinds of developments is a core task of DAAD, as these reforms affect bilateral projects on the one hand and on the other hand might have an impact on the university subjects of German as a Foreign Language or German Studies, and therefor influence the way the German language is taught and spread in Egypt.

For the same reason subcategory G (curricula and didactics) contains the second most results on statements concerning the Egyptian higher education system, representing an almost balanced distribution of six negatives, four neutral, and seven positive statements for the entire study period, again without noticeable changes over the years. Statements classified as positive here mention the fact that even though universities are facing structural difficulties Egypt still produces an impressive

number of scientific talents (DAAD 2017, p.15). Statements classified as negative here include the information that didactic approaches are not (yet) part of the higher education agenda and university teachers still prefer non-interactive ways of teaching (DAAD, 2016, p.18). A trend that apparently already starts within the primary education system as Jore et. al. state in their research. A lack of sufficient teaching material as well as a dire need to reform curricula especially in the context of German as a Foreign Language are two of the main problems named in this context. The need to reform these curricula and provide a more practical, vocational, and interdisciplinary approach is frequently voiced by many professionals working in the field, who consider this one of the most pressing challenges of German departments in Egypt (Jore et.al., 2019, p.769; Tahoun, 2019, p.2).

At the same time, the DAAD-reports also give prove that efforts are made to improve the situation especially in the context of German as a Foreign Language and German Studies at Egyptian universities, with quality-assurance and quality-management becoming popular topics within the Foreign Language Faculties and concrete steps being taken. Faculties and institutes have appointed quality committees led by chairpersons who are responsible for the implementation of the revision of curricula and didactic methods (DAAD, 2016, p.20; DAAD, 2019, p.5). The 2017 report therefore states that quality of higher education in Egypt cannot clearly be classified as either positive or negative (DAAD, 2017, p.15). Still, the fact that these committees are mentioned in the reports since 2016 without naming concrete improvements puts their effectiveness into question.

An additional common issue mentioned in the reports of 2018-2020 is the non-practical approach of higher education, which leaves the students unfit to enter the professional world even after successfully finishing their studies (DAAD, 2018, p.3; DAAD, 2019, p.3; DAAD, 2020, p.2). Practical relevance and applicability of studies are a serious matter in a country like Egypt that struggles with high unemployment rates while 50 percent of the population are younger than 21 (Jore et.al., 2019, p.771). Also in the context of German as a Foreign Language, purely theory-based higher education poses a challenge especially considering the lack of professional German teachers in Egypt. Their training includes a barely noticeable practical part and the prospective teachers lack methodological and didactic knowledge (Jore et.al., 2019, p.768). Statements concerning the lack of practical approaches in higher education are summarized under subcategory E and make a total of 11 in all five years, with nine statements being classified as negative and only one being neutral. Again, the reports show no improvement over the years but rather repeat the same statement mentioning the lack of practical relevance from 2016 till 2020.

Still, subcategory C that comprises only one statement in total and is referring to the educational level of university teachers in Egypt gives a positive account in the 2016 report stating that the educational level of university teachers is good, adding that there is no big difference between state-funded and private universities staff (DAAD, 2016, p.12). While the educational level of teachers at both forms of a university might be similar, their payroll definitely isn't. All reports from 2016 till 2020 mention that state-employed university teachers in Egypt are seriously underpaid (DAAD, 2016, p.18; DAAD, 2017, p.15; DAAD, 2018, p.3; DAAD, 2019, p.3; DAAD, 2020, p.3). Statements concerning the salary of university personal are gathered here under subcategory F and make a total

sum of five – one for each year – all of them being classified as negative, proving that there has been no change or effort made to address this issue during the last years.

By taking a final look at the subcategories A and B, it becomes evident that finances are indeed a serious issue concerning state-funded universities in Egypt. All 14 statements made under subcategory A (finances) in the reports between 2016 and 2020 are classified as negative, with no tendency of improvement. Statements in all five reports describe an overloaded infrastructure and a lack of sufficient space and equipment and talk of a “desolate situation” (DAAD, 2016, p.17f.; DAAD, 2017, p.15; DAAD, 2018, p.3f.; DAAD, 2019, p.3f.; DAAD, 2020, p.2f.). The 2020 report additionally mentions that the 2014 constitution calls for one percent of the gross national product to be made available for research and two percent for higher education. However, that is not enough to meet the actual needs and these measures have not even been put into action in recent years (DAAD, 2020, p.4). Part of the problem is undoubtedly the fact that Egypt has a rather young population, with 50 percent of Egyptians being under the age of 21 which creates a huge demand for educational institutions. Subcategory A (number of students) clearly shows that Egyptian classrooms have been overcrowded for quite a while now, with all 10 statements on that matter being classified as negative, and no improvement evident over the years (DAAD, 2016, p.12, 17; DAAD, 2017, p.17; DAAD, 2018, p.3; DAAD, 2019, p.3; DAAD, 2020, p.2f.).

Statements on the quality and effectiveness of Egyptian-German cooperation in higher education

Evaluating the effectiveness of something from textual material is a difficult endeavor and contains the danger of applying a rather free interpretation as Mayring warns in his description of qualitative content analysis (Mayring, 2015, p.10). Therefore, the second part of data analysis focusses on statements that could be clearly identified as positive or negative by the above described coding system with only one exception in the 2017-report that should be classified as neutral because of its twofold nature: While the statement points out that there are clear advantages for both countries, it also states that German partners often fail to see them at first glance and to acknowledge the importance of bilateral cooperation from the very start (DAAD, 2017, p.21).

In general, statements made in the DAAD-reports on the quality and effectiveness of Egyptian-German cooperation in higher education take a more positive stance. On 31 statements made in total, 17 can be classified as positive, 13 as negative, and one as neutral. While the 2016 report doesn't give much information on the topic at all, with only one statement referring to the fact that cooperation in higher education between both countries are taking place in different fields of academia and being mostly problem-free (DAAD, 2016, p.28), the later reports comment more extensively on the subject. In 2017 it is stated amongst others, that requirements for a productive collaboration are favorable because academic exchange between both countries is based on a long tradition and that Egyptians in general have a very friendly attitude towards Germany, which is instrumental in establishing fruitful collaborations (DAAD, 2017, p.22). Furthermore, cooperation is said to be based on personal long-term relations that also positively influences the initiation of shared scientific projects and publications (DAAD, 2017, p.25). A fact that becomes evident for example in the publication of Michael Fisch's and Dalia Aboul Fotouh Salama's *Die Wissenschaft ist ein Meer*

ohne Ufer. Beiträge zum Forschungskolloquium an der Abteilung für Germanistik der Universität Kairo (Science is a Shoreless Sea. Contribution to the Research Colloquium at the German Department of Cairo University) or Nahla Tawfik' and Eva Neuland's *Texte zur interkulturellen Germanistik in Forschung und Lehre* (Texts on intercultural German Studies in Research and Education). In both cases, Egyptian and German experts in the field of German as a Foreign Language and German Studies published their latest research together. Both publications explicitly mention the well-established relationship between DAAD and Egyptian academia (Fisch and Aboul Fotouh Salama, 2017, p.9; Tawfik and Neuland, 2017, p.7).

Additional statements classified as positive in the 2017 report comment on binational master programs like the one between Ain-Shams-University and the University of Leipzig as being "the backbone of transnational education" (DAAD, 2017, p.29.) and stating that well established academic relationships tend to be maintained even in politically difficult times (DAAD, 2017, p.25). These positive statements are found also in the following reports with a strong emphasis on the long tradition of academic cooperation between both countries (DAAD, 2018, p.5; DAAD, 2019, p.6; DAAD, 2020, p.6). The later reports add positive remarks on the fact that cooperation is not limited to the field of humanities and the German language but expand to shared projects and cooperative work in the field of medicine, engineering, environmental and climate protection and lately renewable energies (DAAD, 2018, p.5ff.; DAAD, 2019, p.5f.; DAAD, 2020 p.8).

On the other hand, the four last reports name considerable obstacles within the bilateral cooperation that stay more or less the same during the whole period of investigation between 2016 and 2020. Of 13 statements classified as negative nine are referring to Egyptian bureaucracy as non-transparent, slow and arbitrary and restricting the mobility of Egyptian academics (DAAD, 2017, p.20ff., DAAD, 2018, p.5; DAAD, 2019, p.6; DAAD 2020, p.6). The last three reports all include negative classified statements that mention a general distrust of foreign investors as something affecting bilateral cooperation in higher education (DAAD, 2018, p.5; DAAD, 2019, p.6, DAAD, 2020, p.6).

Conclusion

Egypt and Germany look back on a long history of academic exchange and bilateral cooperation in higher education. A steadily increasing number of Egyptians learning German in school or studying German as a Foreign Language or German Studies at university help creating a scientific community that perceives Germany as a reliable partner while both countries establish meaningful relations as part of their cultural and educational policies. Relations, that hopefully have the strength to endure even in politically difficult times. The analysis of DAAD-reports on Egypt between the years of 2016 and 2020 has proven cooperation in higher education between both countries is effective and well perceived by both partners even though there are still obstacles to overcome.

Nevertheless, these developments do not necessarily result in sufficient learning and teaching conditions at Egyptian universities as the data analysis of the DAAD-reports have clearly proven. Universities are struggling with outdated curricula, a shortage of qualified teachers, and overcrowded

classrooms. Attempts to address these problems are discussed, but to assure that they are actually put into action, all stakeholders on-site have to make the improvement of public education a priority. In this context, additional research on the Egyptian point of view would be beneficial as the present article focuses exclusively on the German perspective while the main tasks and challenges discussed here lie with the Egyptian government.

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