

**STATEMENT**  
**ON THE FUTURE OF ACADEMIC GERMAN TEACHER TRAINING IN EGYPT:**  
**RESEARCH-BASED AND PRACTICE-ORIENTATED**

Elaborated at a COSIMENA<sup>1</sup> symposium in Cairo from 2 to 4 June 2024

**Preamble**

*The promotion of the German language, especially its teaching, has traditionally been a significant pillar of the Federal Republic of Germany's foreign cultural and educational policy. In the academic field, this is notably evident in the wide range of activities funded by the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service), including the granting of individual scholarships for language courses, the contribution of visiting lecturers who are placed at HE institutions across the globe for several years, and the funding of projects or entire study programmes. Recent developments have considerably increased the importance of German as a foreign language (GFL), particularly in the context of the globalisation of the labour market. Furthermore, proficiency in the German language is essential for fostering value-orientated bilateral relations between Egypt and Germany. There is no other non-European country where the German language has witnessed such widespread use and acceptance as in Egypt. This is evidenced by the substantial rise in the number of learners of German.<sup>2</sup> The Egyptian state is committed to enhancing this trend, as reflected in the strategic 'Vision 2030' and various measures and initiatives such as '100 German-Egyptian schools', 'German lessons for engineering and medical students', 'German as a second foreign language from grade 7', amongst others. It is essential to strengthen academic teaching and research in the field of GFL/ German studies in order to address the challenges associated with this development. One key element in this context is the Master's degree programme 'German as a Foreign Language in an Arabic-German Context', which has been offered jointly by Ain Shams University and Leipzig University since 2008, as it brings together various Egyptian and German stakeholders in the field of GFL.*

**Research focus in the Master's programme 'GFL in an Arabic-German context'**

In our rapidly changing world, research and research-based approaches are more important than ever. The foundations of our knowledge and understanding, the way we communicate, the linguistic variation as well as the modes of (local and global) communication are changing dramatically. This has a fundamental impact on language and cultural skills. It is therefore crucial for an academic subject such as GFL to analyse and understand these processes of change and to identify new fields of research. In the field of GFL we ask what these processes (digitalisation, artificial intelligence, multilingualism, migration, language variation, cultural diversification, media and cultural change, Sustainable Development Goals, etc.) mean for

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<sup>1</sup> COSIMENA (Clusters of Scientific Innovation in the Middle East and North Africa) is a DAAD project that aims to strengthen and initiate scientific cooperation and to make networks of researchers and universities between Germany and the MENA region visible. As a result, existing cooperation is made visible and potential synergies are initiated (see <https://www.daad.de/en/about-us/cosimena/>).

<sup>2</sup> Between 2015 and 2020, the number of German language learners in Egypt increased from around 250,000 to over 400,000 (Source: Auswärtiges Amt: Deutsch als Fremdsprache weltweit. Datenerhebung 2015 and 2020).

language and cultural mediation. A Master's degree in 'GFL in an Arabic-German context' represents a crucial link between theory and practice, facilitating the planning, development and optimisation of a variety of German language teaching programmes. However, it also provides current research questions due to the emergence of new challenges and developments in teaching practice. In the Egyptian context, for example, there are emerging new programmes (see above) and practical requirements related to German (e.g. language skills in various professional fields, specialist training, labour migration, multilingualism). Therefore, further research and specialised concepts are urgently needed. The current development is characterised by great dynamism. At the same time, there is a high demand for further and continuing education and training for German teachers, which can only be met by well-trained young academics.

The rapid social changes are also generating a significant shift in research methods, which will also transform teaching and professional practice: Large scale of language data, artificial intelligence, comprehensive learner language corpora and the use of videography of lessons as well as corresponding tools are changing the way in which we analyse and teach language, enabling completely new insights and findings. Those who want to act responsibly in the field of GFL need to be familiar with these methods, be able to assess them critically and take them into account in a professional context. Anyone wishing to conduct research in the field of GFL must be able to apply these methods in an appropriate manner.

The focus on research is important for the training of the next generation of Egyptian academics and for the establishment of GFL as an independent and sustainable discipline in Egypt. Research-related content of the Master's degree programme in the Egyptian context includes, for example, the investigation of teaching and learning processes in large groups, in a digital and virtual space, in the context of multilingualism, and with different target groups. The use of digital and smart media (virtual reality, artificial intelligence, social media) also plays a central role. In the field of cultural and literary studies, new post-colonial and post-structuralist theories and approaches, amongst others, are being discussed intensively. These approaches take a critical look at processes such as globalisation and the fragmentation of the world seeking to elucidate their underlying dynamics. The strong demand for German and the rapidly increasing number of learners in Egypt urgently require rigorous empirical research into teaching and learning processes in this context. The binational Master's degree can, in this context, serve as a 'research hub', thus contributing to the internationalisation of universities and fostering research cooperation in an international context, a role this programme has already played successfully in the past.

### **Cooperation and networking in the area of teaching in the binational Master's degree programme 'GFL in an Arabic-German context'**

Research, reference to practical and professional contexts, and teaching are subject to constant further development in the MA programme. This is achieved through the principle of research-based learning. A unique feature of the Master's degree programme in the context of academic education in Egypt is therefore, among other things, that it systematically promotes openness, critical competence and reflective skills as basic requirements for good teachers. This is

accomplished, for example, through the integration of practice-related elements, which is achieved by the programme's cooperation with renowned partner institutions over the entire period of study; this also includes the development of relevant reflection questions for the preparation of internships. Due to the binational character of the degree programme, direct exchange and transfer processes also take place between German and Egyptian educational institutions. The integrated semester abroad at the respective partner university is of particular importance. Leipzig students are familiarised with Egyptian study, research and professional contexts, just as Egyptian students gain intensive experience with the corresponding German contexts.

It is not least because of these special features that the degree programme has had a substantial impact on the education and professional development of German teachers. This is achieved, among other things, by graduates who bring the skills they have acquired to a wide variety of educational institutions in a professional and competent manner. In addition, the lecturers of the degree programme also benefit from this exchange, which has a positive impact on their further teaching and research activities. The involvement of Leipzig University and several other Egyptian universities is a decisive added value for the scope of the programme and the widening of the academic discourse. In this way, the Master's contributes to the development of sustainable educational programmes and structures, drives innovation and networking with various stakeholders in the region and internationally, thus enabling a lasting transfer between research & development and the professional and specialist world as well as Egyptian educational institutions (third mission).

To sum up, the binational Master's degree represents a flagship project in the national and regional context, which also enriches other GFL education contexts in Egypt and beyond. It also leads to the development of region-specific expertise among Leipzig students and academics. In view of the migration movements from the Arab-Islamic world to Germany as well growing economic bilateral collaboration, this expertise is also increasingly in demand in the German context.

### **Needs of the Master's programme "GFL in the Arabic-German context"**

The continuation of the Master's programme is fundamentally dependent on **substantial support** from various institutions, in particular on the appropriate staffing of the **EZ DAAF** at the **Faculty of Education at Ain Shams University Cairo** and the **Herder Institute at Leipzig University**. Academic staff must also have sufficient time and opportunities to carry out **research** and **third mission tasks** in addition to teaching.

The continuation of the programme also depends **existentially on financial support from DAAD**. In particular, the one-semester visits to Germany by Egyptian students must be financially supported, as Egyptian students generally do not have the means to finance such a stay at their own expense due to the severe economic crisis and the associated massive loss in value of the Egyptian currency. In addition, funds are also needed for coordination tasks, tutorials and a certain degree of mobility for lecturers. Although Herder Institute at Leipzig University has been endeavouring for years to obtain additional Erasmus+ funding, the

securing of such funds is not reliable and can fluctuate greatly in scope, which means that they can only partially contribute to lecturer and student mobility.

The participants of the symposium 'On the future of academic German teacher training in Egypt: research-based and practice-oriented' (Cairo, 2 to 4 June 2024) have jointly developed the statement presented here. They emphasise the central role of the Master's degree programme for the future of German language support in Egypt and have pledged their willingness to **cooperate** and **provide support**. The Master's degree programme is already cooperating with many of the participating institutions who contribute to the teaching of the MA or offer internships for its students. **At the symposium, several schools, the Goethe-Institute, ZfA (Organisation of German Schools Abroad), as well as further partner institutions committed themselves to support the MA programme in the future in terms of personnel, ideas and concepts.** This means that the Master's degree programme is connected excellently with a network of partner institutions. It is planned to strengthen this network even further by the implementation of additional measures.

**This statement was elaborated and supported by participants from the following institutions:**

Head of the Department of Culture and Education, German Embassy Cairo

Representative of the Egyptian Ministry of Education

Vice President for Postgraduate Studies and Research at Ain Shams University Cairo

Head of the DAAD branch office in Cairo

Goethe Institute Cairo

Advisor to the Central Agency for German Schools Abroad (ZfA) Cairo

Renowned Germanists from Egyptian universities (Helwan University, King Salman International University, Cairo University, German University in Cairo, Ain Shams University)

Managing Director, Herder Institute, University of Leipzig

DAAD lecturers in Cairo

Representatives of schools (German Protestant High School Cairo DEO, Nefertari German International School, Rahn Education - Rahn Schools Cairo)

Representatives of the Master's programme 'German as a Foreign Language in the Arabic-German Context' of the Faculty of Education at Ain Shams University and the Herder Institute at Leipzig University

For more detailed information please contact: [dafkairo@uni-leipzig.de](mailto:dafkairo@uni-leipzig.de)