Technical Secondary Schools (TSS) in Egypt deliver a comprehensive Career Guidance Programme tailored to students in (upper) secondary technical education under the Technical Education Sector of the Ministry of Education.

The School to Work Transition (STWT) Unit, created by the Ministry of Education, operates on a national and governorate level to coordinate career guidance and other school-based youth employment promotion services in Egypt’s technical education system.

The GIZ Employment Promotion Project (EPP I, 2011-2015) supported the Ministry technically to develop the career guidance programme in cooperation with technical teachers and to introduce it into Technical Secondary Schools (TSS).

GIZ EPP II (2016 to date) has been mandated to institutionalise the curriculum of Career Education in Technical Education.

Its dissemination is supported by the USAID WISE project, and the EU TVET II project. GIZ conducted the first impact assessment and produces occupational information (occupation cards, video clips) jointly with the ILO project ‘Decent Jobs for Egypt’s Young People’.

Career Education is delivered to TSS students in Egypt throughout technical education from grade 10 until graduation in grade 12, when students are between 15 and 18 years of age.

In some governorates like Alexandria, Qena and New Valley, close to full coverage is achieved: almost all classes in all TSS take part in the CG programme. The Ministry of Education plans to fully disseminate the programme into other governorates.
Career Education in Egypt's technical schools empowers students to take informed decisions in managing transition from school to work or to career-related higher education or training. It encourages students to build careers on their strengths and raises awareness of opportunities in non-academic working fields. Helping students acquire career management skills contrasts with models, where students receive expert advice (e.g. based on testing results) directing them to specific educational pathways or occupational fields.

The comprehensive career guidance programme was developed to give students orientation: Students, during schooling, explore their individual strengths, values and resources on one hand, and available learning and working opportunities on the other. Students develop individual transition options (into work and further learning) where individual strengths overlap with accessible opportunities. Students examine and compare transition options; they set priorities, investigate, plan, and start forming decisions before they graduate in grade 12.

Students acquire career management skills not only for this first critical transition from school to work, but also for all career decisions that inevitably are going to follow (preparation). Students learn how employers look at applicants and conclude how to search and apply for a job. Students discuss critical workplace situations to better meet the challenges of maintaining a job. They are informed about legal aspects of employment (rights and duties) and self-employment. The CG programme trains and develops exploration skills. Students choose work and learning opportunities that are of interest to them and explore them in the field gaining authentic first-hand information and impressions. Exploration results are shared in class. Therefore, students must practise decision-making, exploration, and presentation and other employment relevant skills (e.g. teamwork).

The “matching” is more so self-matching: Students are empowered to find themselves suitable first work experiences and to develop their careers from there.

Background

In Egypt, like in many countries, Career Guidance is a newly emerging field of work. In January 2010, a National Task Force on Career Guidance identified a significant lack of career guidance services in Egypt’s education system, negatively impacting on youth employment. Usually students are selected for education institutions based solely on their academic achievements in the national exams.

According to ILO data1, school leavers experience a long and difficult transition period into their first regular job; more than 90 percent of young workers in Egypt are in informal employment. Most students in technical education state that they want to continue with higher education. At the same time, a huge unmet demand for human resources in the manufacturing sector of the labour market hampers productivity and economic development.

The Ministry of Education identified technical education as a good starting point for developing first career guidance services to ease school to work transition.

First Steps

During a pilot phase (2012-2015), the project developed and tested a comprehensive career education programme with initially 40 teachers from six pilot technical secondary schools (TSS). GIZ EPP experts introduced foundations and principles of career guidance and a first series of draft units. In collaboration with the pioneering teachers, the units and sessions were modified to fit both the cultural setting and the technical education context. Participating teachers also undertook central sessions to experience the differences to regular teaching. Teachers also tested the programme with students and gathered valuable implementation experiences that considerably improved and enriched the programme. Based on this experiential approach, three implementation manuals (one for each grade) were developed and the concepts and manuals for the training of Career Guidance Facilitators and Multipliers were available to use on a broader scale.
The Career Guidance Programme

The final programme is comprised of a series of student-centred lessons and activities delivered by trained teachers ("Career Guidance Facilitators") throughout the three years of technical education. It consists of 63 sessions of 90 minutes each, totalling to 94 hours of direct interaction between Facilitators and students ("clients"). Students receive 21 sessions per year at school and complete additional (individual or group) assignments in out of school-settings.

Delivery Methods

The contents of the curriculum require sophisticated facilitation methods and competent CG Facilitators capable of using modern methodology to help students achieve intended learning outcomes. Intended learning outcomes are personal and different for every student. A broad variety of methods (e.g. presentations, imagination-based approaches, group discussions, individual work, working in pairs, team work, role plays, case studies, reflected practice, lecturing, competitions, video clips, computer-aided activities, motor and mental games, and brainstorming) are used to help students understand what they think, feel, and believe. There is no "right" or "wrong"; Facilitators don’t judge students’ conclusions but may challenge students’ beliefs and decision-making with questions. Also, Facilitators encourage exchange of thoughts on a peer to peer-level and facilitate peer discussions.

Teacher Training

The roles of the CG Facilitator and the ‘client’ (i.e. the student) as well as the delivery methods, were radically new for the Egyptian classroom. Training CG Facilitators is the core part of successfully implementing Career Education in TSS. The best CG Facilitators were trained to serve as CG Multipliers (training new CG Facilitators). This training model was necessary, because career guidance programmes do not yet exist at universities or teacher training institutions.

All teacher training in Career Guidance is comprised of three steps:

· Theory: six full days of intense and interactive training, where teachers are exposed to some of the programme’s contents and all of its methods.

· Practice: Teachers implement the programme with students as a practical part of their training.

· Reflection: Students’ learning outcomes are monitored and reviewed. Teachers’ implementation experiences are reflected upon during an additional three workshop days following each practice phase. Coaches visit facilitators two times during the practice phase to give individual feedback.

This combination of theory, practice, and reflection is repeated for every school year: During the summer break, teachers undertake six days of training on the contents and methods for students of grade 10 (first manual), are then sent to implement (as the practice part of their training), and eventually meet again to jointly reflect on their implementation experiences with colleagues and trainers. The cycle is repeated for grade 11 and grade 12 materials.

In parallel, GIZ EPP supports the Ministry of Education to establish a career path for Career Guidance practitioners (teachers, facilitators, multipliers, master trainers) in cooperation with higher education institutions and to supplement the training delivery with e-learning (online) tools for continuous professional development.
Institutionalisation and Dissemination

The curriculum, the workbook for students and the training manuals for facilitators and multipliers are approved by the Ministry of Education and its in-service teacher training institution, the Professional Academy for Teachers (PAT). All implementation and training manuals are published and available in the Arabic language.

The Ministry of Education has established a “School to Work-Transition (STWT) Unit” on a central (national) level as well as STWT units in every governorate. This institutional set-up is important for the dissemination of the Career Guidance Programme and the coordination of career guidance with other school-based employment services (entrepreneurship training, placement, technical trainings, labour market information, occupational safety and health). This structure is also reflected at the school level. The roll-out of career guidance in technical education is supported with donor support (GIZ, USAID, EU, ILO).

The Career Guidance Programme

The programme’s series of sessions and activities are constructed around the three main content areas of self-awareness, opportunity-awareness and transition management.

(number of sessions of 90 minutes each)

Students, in grade 10, start with a series of lessons and activities with a focus on self-awareness: they look at their personal life goals, become aware of the skills they already have or can easily gain, deal with personal values and create first job ideas (based on their skills and values).

In grade 11, the second year of the career guidance programme, the focus is on exploring the world of work and learning opportunities (opportunity awareness): Students gain awareness of the fact that labour markets are changing quickly, they learn exploration and networking techniques, investigate opportunities for work and learning in depth, learn job-search and application techniques, and work through critical incidents (realistic problematic workplace situations).

The final year is mainly dedicated to investigating and comparing transition options and pathways as well as for individual transition planning.
Additional Activities

Several other activities are supporting additions to GIZ EPP’s work on Career Guidance:

- There is, for example, an online game ("Candy Career") which has been built on the programme’s three main pillars (self-awareness, opportunity awareness, decision-making and career planning) and is accessible for all youth.

- Career information resources (21 video job profiles and occupational cards) were developed in cooperation with the ILO and laid the foundations for a future Career Information System. The video job profiles were shot with the support of several companies in different sectors (hospitality, food and beverages, ready-made garments, printing, vehicle maintenance, etc.) and are available (partly with English subtitles) at the Egypt-at-Work YouTube Channel.

- An additional and optional activity is the "Opportunity Scouting Camp" developed by GIZ EPP: Volunteering students, during the summer break, are "hired" by a virtual company that exists for a couple of weeks and is run by CG Facilitators, often supported by mentor employers or Human Resource professionals. The company’s purpose is to systematically explore a certain labour market sector for employers and jobseekers. "Employees" (students) search the predefined area and interview employers (for vacancies) and young jobseekers (jobseeker profiles). Both are invited to visit the job fair which concludes the Opportunity Scouting experience. Office and fieldwork operations are “supervised” by CG Facilitators. The activity starts with a week of career guidance, job preparation training, application training and “recruitment”: Students apply for the virtual jobs and sign "contracts". Students are then sent out for about two weeks of fieldwork or engage in the processing and data entry of logistics and administration. The Opportunity Scouting simulates professional standard operation procedures, and produces a service that is very valuable for employers and jobseekers alike, providing the latter with vocationally relevant skills and competencies.

- Career Guidance depends on committed and competent teachers as the most important resource. The project’s achievements are directly attributable to the efforts, initiative and commitment of technical teachers in Egypt.

- Teacher training (CG Facilitators, CG Multipliers, CG Master Trainers), although costly, and ideally combined with coaching and continuous professional exchange, is also critical.

- Supportive school management teams and the political back-up of the administration of the education system are essential for enabling cultural change in the classroom and for providing suitable working environments, curriculum, workbooks, and teacher training.

- A flexible classroom, with teaching aid equipment such as moderation cards, videos (laptop, beamer, speakers), simple cameras (for exploration), flipcharts or pin boards, chalk and black boards, paper & crayons, as well as further items for educational games (e.g. boxes, forks, blindfolds, tape) is useful.

- For long-term success the programme also requires external advocacy support from parents and the private sector to back up and support the programme.

- The Ministry of Education has taken a key role regarding policy and programme development as well as budget allocation and administrative support for continuing the nation-wide roll-out and for gradually expanding CG services into Technical Education (primary and preparatory education) and post compulsory education (Higher Education).
Quantitative Results

By early 2018, more than 50,000 students in 298 Technical Secondary Schools in all 27 governorates of Egypt receive the service.

More than 1,300 teachers have been trained to deliver the service as Career Guidance Facilitators by 32 CG Multipliers.

Qualitative Results

Evaluation results show that the Career Guidance programme has had a transformative impact on individuals:

- The CG programme outcomes are rated highly effective at the level of transformative learning by all stakeholder groups (students, CG teachers, parents, and project staff).

- The programme design with its emphasis on the pivotal role of personal development and of the student’s (client’s) capabilities, life perspectives and career paths is highly valued by all stakeholders. Students and teachers express appreciation for the experiential teaching-learning methodology.

- A clear majority of beneficiaries consider career guidance beneficial and recommend it to others.

- In comparison to a control group, more participating students have developed career goals and pursue further learning of a new skill or language. They are more self-confident, more active and more optimistic. Participating students are found to have greater job search skills (according to their self-assessment but also reflected in their actual job search efforts).

Institutionalisation and Sustainability

- The Ministry’s School to Work-Transition Units have been established on a central and governorate level. They support the decentralization and dissemination of career guidance and other employment services across the country.

- CG curriculum, methods, and trainings are accredited for Technical Education.

- A firm body of national experts (CG Multipliers and Master Trainers) is actively promoting and disseminating the programme.

Tips for Practitioners

Follow the Paradigm Shift!

Career Guidance, after the Millennium, is shifting
- from ‘choosing a career’ to ‘constructing a career’,
- from ‘psychological testing’ to ‘tasting the world of work’, and
- from ‘external expert support’ to ‘career self-management skills’.

Career Education requires a student-centred approach that allows for highly individualised (diverse) learning outcomes while setting and ‘teaching’ inputs are standardised.
Reinvent the Wheel!

Use the common principles and foundations of Career Guidance to re-construct interventions jointly with the actual classroom experts (teachers). In this way the programme is optimally adjusted to the education and labour market context, enriched with local pedagogical know-how, concepts, terminology, mental concepts, and cultural flavour and optimally integrated into regular schooling.

Practice and Reflect Practice!

The training triad of theory, practice, and reflection is essential
· for having teachers experience new facilitation methods (firstly on themselves, as participants in trainings, and secondly the impact of the methods on students);
· to learn from teachers about the realities in the classroom and to use their creative pedagogical potential to translate feedback into lessons and activities.

Consider Timing!

The best time for Career Education is, when students feel the relevance of planning for their future after graduation and when the economic pressure to generate income is not yet high or urgent. Examination times must be avoided. Synchronising with other employment relevant activities (e.g. internships) is important, too.

Connect!

The formulation of personal objectives is done from the viewpoint of the client (by the students) and not from the viewpoint of the facilitator (teacher). The delivery methods require trustful interaction between an impartial facilitator (whose task is to help the client achieve his or her goals), an openness to real life experiences, and a mixture of pedagogical and counselling approaches. Apart from a good relationship between students/clients and teachers/facilitators, schools need partners in delivering career guidance. Lessons and activities must extend beyond the classroom, involving family members, employers, and also education and training institutions.

Selection of Teachers

Introducing the Career Education Programme requires teachers to undergo intense training, to do a lot of unpaid extra work, and to challenge themselves to slip into the learning role and to try something new. Important criteria for the selection of the first (pilot) teachers into the training were that future CG Facilitators should:
· Like students (have an ability to relate to students and courage to do so increasingly on an interpersonal level).
· Like to learn (can see themselves as learners and trainers at the same time and have the curiosity, the openness, and the creativity to learn and to develop new methods and classroom activities and share these with fellow colleagues).
· Like to put things into practice and to learn from practical experiences (as opposed to theoretical academic approaches).

Pilot and Roll-Out Phase

In the beginning and for a very long time there were no other incentives for teachers to participate in the training than the fun they had during the training and the effects they witnessed on themselves, on their students and on the relationships between themselves and students. At this initial stage, a dropout rate of 50 percent can be expected for the first cohort of CG facilitators and multipliers. Only the really committed and truly convinced continue and fill the roles of ambassadors, trainers, and experts. This initial rate decreases rapidly as the programme takes shape, more teachers join in, and services expand along with ministry support.

In the long run, however, a programme can only succeed, if the Ministry supports it with policy, networking, and budgeting. Roll-out requires standardisation (curriculum, workbooks, training manuals), institutionalisation and institutional learning and inter-institutional collaboration. Detailed implementation guides (Manuals) and training assessments commit the second and following teacher cohorts to conduct the same curriculum with all classes and students, using a pre-defined set of activities and methods (standard input), allowing for individual learning results and outcomes. Learning results are not evaluated by the CG Facilitator, but by their client, the individual student.