

Editorial

Dear Readers,

Climate change has become a reality and an immediate experience for more and more people around the world. While many may still argue about the extent of the impact of human action on the climate: that the climate is in fact changing for the worse due to our involvement seems more than clear.

Therefore, many organizations have begun to recognize good ideas for adapting to the impact of a warming atmosphere. Many give out awards for particularly innovative solutions. It is for this purpose that the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) is awarding the Business Impact Award to companies and organizations in developing and emerging countries. SEKEM has now been recognized with this award.

The Business Impact Award will make it easier for SEKEM to present their ideas and projects to powerful international actors and achieve greater recognition for them. SEKEM is delighted to receive the prize because these awards are important since they can animate companies to greater responsibility for the sustainable development of all mankind.

Your Team of Editors

Find SEKEM also on the Internet at:



Vocational Training

SEKEM's Dual
Vocational Training

Eurythmy

Using Eurythmy
Against Stress

Liquorice

Medicinal Plant
of 2012

A Model Concept for Vocational Training

1.5 million trainees push onto the Egyptian vocational training market every year increasingly exceeding state institutions' capacities. SEKEM's own training centre offers a successful alternative.



SEKEM's trainees learn in the workshop, the school, and the firm following a well-proven German example.

1.5 million young school graduates annually pour onto the Egyptian vocational training market. Of these approximately 70% are boys and 30% are girls. With the completion of compulsory schooling, from 9th grade on it is admissible for them to choose any of three different kinds of vocational training tracks and various different types of schools all under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Education. At the Technical School they may attend a three-year training

including theoretical and practical education alternating every 3 months. Alternatively, they may study at a traditional Vocational School for 5 years. This track offers them exclusively theoretical training. A third option is available to them through the schools of the so-called „Mubarak-Kohl-Initiative“. In the 90s the two statesmen launched a programme that since then has been aiming to make vocational training German-style (based on a dual educational system) more

popular in Egypt. Schools taking part in the programme regularly connect 4 days of practical learning with 2 days of theory thus ensuring a close inter-linkage between the two and a substantial level of on-the-job experience.

Despite this variety of different options, the Egyptian vocational training landscape is in many ways still not up to the challenge of adequately training the country's adolescents. There are substantial deficiencies especially in the areas of educational quality, practical relevance and topicality.

It was thus here that SEKEM saw an excellent starting point for a new, more holistic approach to the task. In 1997 the Vocational Training Centre was the first step into this direction.

Following a German Example

SEKEM's Vocational Training Center (VTC) also participates in the "Mubarak-Kohl-Initiative". It was founded in the late nineties and since then has trained more than 800 apprentices. Here young people from the rural environment around SEKEM's central farm close to Belbeis may receive instruction on professions in high demand on the local, rural markets. The VTC aims to foster very close links to the true developmental needs of the region and its people.

Several three-year programmes of hands-on teaching are available to the approximately 250 apprentices that attend the centre at any one time. They include programmes in carpentry, plumbing, textile manufacturing, electrical installation, agricultural machinery, office clerk and metal processing.

In fully furnished workshops and real-life workplaces the young people receive an education that provides them with career opportunities in rural workplaces. The training concept provides the trainees with a distinguishing characteristic in their personal profile and thus an advantage on the labour market. It also helps in the acquisition of specialised skills. SEKEM's provision of vocational

training is officially recognised by the Egyptian authorities.

Holistic Thinking in Vocational Training

It became clear for SEKEM early on that the Egyptian government curricula would not provide its students with experiences relevant to the development of their personalities. Therefore SEKEM started out to develop a vocational training concept that not only provides closer integration between theoretical courses and practical experience, but also injects more artistic, cultural, and - above all - social elements.

Firstly, at SEKEM learning and work are particularly closely linked. Theoretical classes, practical learning and the creation of parts for industrial-scale manufacturing or everyday use are part of the training from the beginning. They all aim to promote a self-managed and self-directed understanding of work. Artistic courses then try to foster a creative self-experience in dealing with the material and workpiece at hand. They also aim to strengthen personal development within the social networks of the groups of apprentices and other co-workers all forming part of the wider SEKEM community. Courses are available in fields of art such as music, crafts, and other artistic subjects. Particular emphasis is placed on the practice of social skills.

Future Challenges

Based on these elements SEKEM believe that its training concept has model character. They would therefore like to continue to improve it, especially in terms of quality. One specific challenge is the accompaniment of the practice periods in the various SEKEM firms by expertly trained vocational instructors. "Masters", as they are known from German crafts and who also possess a licence to vocational instruction, do not exist in Egypt.

SEKEM would therefore like to invest more effort in an advancement



Training opportunities encompass technologically demanding offers offered with assistance by German professional.

of quality, specifically in teacher education, and to improve training quality in the workplace. In electrical installation, for instance, the course that takes 3 years to complete is regularly overseen by a retired vocational school teacher from Southern Germany. SEKEM also plans to expand on its independent production units within the training workshops to better connect the world of vocational instruction to that of real-world entrepreneurship. This not only increases the quality of the practice periods through immediate market awareness, but also promotes the entrepreneurial skills of the trainees and provides the "training company" with an income. In textile manufacturing and carpentry these small „supplier“ units have proven very successful. Other interests include an extension of the available range of tools through more current, industry-standard equipment. There is still need for modernization. In addition, the training instructors shall be trained inside the companies to improve their own lessons and the training of vocational teachers shall also be improved.

In all these areas SEKEM will be pleased to receive applications by professionals or even notices on the availability of used equipment and machinery. Of particular interest are experienced professionals with a sense of practical engagement and exceptional interpersonal skills.

Regina Hanel

Regina Hanel supports the work of the Vocational Training Centre at SEKEM.

From Dysstress to Eustress: Inner Balance Through Eurythmy

SEKEM co-worker Martina Dinkel recently completed her Master thesis on eurythmy in the workplace. The study analyses if eurythmy can help improve ones work life at finds some promising evidence.



As the study by Martina Dinkel shows, eurythmy in the workplace can have a strongly positive impact on stress reduction and contribute to the employees wellbeing.

In September 2011, SEKEM co-worker Martina Dinkel, in charge of the SEKEM Eurythmy Ensemble, finished her Master thesis at the Alanus College for the Arts and Society in Alfter (Germany). Her study addresses the issue of whether eurythmy in the workplace can lead to a measurable stress reduction by transforming unhealthy stress („dysstress“) into a form of stress that enhances performance and does not reduce personal wellbeing („eustress“). The political upheavals of the last year in Egypt provided her work with a particularly interesting field of study.

Between Dysstress and Eustress

Dysstress has its roots in a negative imbalance between one's personal wellbeing and external factors coming into play while eustress refers to a positive balance of forces. Can

the latter not be achieved over an extended period of time, a person is threatened with chronic stress that can eventually lead to “burn-out” syndrome. The study intended to examine whether the movement-based art of eurythmy can lead to a better balance between work and private life that counteracts the effects of harmful stress in the workplace, a significant factor in reduced economic productivity and wellbeing.

For the detection of stress, the measurement of the hormone cortisol and the enzyme alpha amylase in the saliva have been proven reliable and informative. The detection of the immune marker immunoglobulin A (IgA) by saliva analysis may also be helpful. This study considered all of these indicators.

Martina Dinkel chose the supervisors of SEKEM's textile processing

plant Naturetex as subjects of her study. Due to the political developments of the winter of 2010/2011 the employees were exposed to increased stress, a condition that provided an ideal starting point for the investigation.

Criteria of the Study

The key criteria for an effective and sustainable positive impact of eurythmy exercises on the human body is the double principle of “deceleration vs. acceleration”, of “movement vs. motionlessness”. Thus all exercises should always be performed with the effect of counter-resonance in mind of the instructor, that can make an individuals energy resources available through a repeated cycle of specific movements. This interplay of different kinds of movements is often missing from workplaces in our era of permanent acceleration. In stressful situations, for example, inhalation universally dominates exhalation. It is therefore important to “bring people in motion” through physical and mental activity. Rhythmic movements lead to the excitation of a person's self-regulative functions, strengthen the forces of life and the harmonization of the pulse-breath ratio. All exercises should focus on the centre of an individual's mental balance and help to locate and active energy resources.

Results

The study results showed a significant reduction in cortisol levels and a similar trend in the levels of alpha amylase. This indicates a very positive effect of eurythmic exercises on human wellbeing. However, IgA levels were found to not be affected. Overall, a clear relationship among laboratory

parameters was found. The effect apparently depends largely on how precisely an exercise is carried out.

Thus, if eurythmy can indeed be used as an effective tool for stress reduction, the question remains, why a decisive influence on the IgA immune marker could not be identified. This could have been due to the fact that the exercises were specifically chosen to have an effect on physical and men-



Eurythmy can help the individual to locate and address his or her inner balance.

tal stress levels and that the specific immune-enhancing component was not adequately considered.

The results suggest that further analysis would be desirable to explore other positive effects. These would have to be carried out with a larger number of subjects, more comparison groups, and focusing on different laboratory parameters. Based on the results of this study, however, one may already surmise that companies are well-advised to integrate eurythmy in many contexts work to a far greater extent than is practiced already.

Martina Dinkel

The study was carried out as a Master thesis in the Master of Arts in Social Eurythmy at the Alanus College. It will appear in a college publication in 2012 named „Praxisreihe Kunst - Kunst im Dialog“. The author welcomes comments and inquiries at martina.dinkel@SEKEM.com.

SEKEM Participates in European EduCamp Project

Dr. Clemens Mader, advisory council member of the SEKEM support association in Austria, and his wife examined the implementation of the project in Egypt.



Education is seen as a central aspect of the overall aim to promote sustainable development in general. The goal of respecting it more in children's education is vital to ensuring them a better future and it poses a key challenge to public schools in Egypt.

The EduCamp project (Education for Sustainable Development beyond the campus) is an EU-funded intervention aiming to achieve this goal through better teacher training and the provision of more innovative teaching techniques and materials to schools. Six European and 14 Egyptian partners are involved in this project, including SEKEM and its Heliopolis Academy for Applied Arts and Sciences. The Austrian institution RCE Graz-Styria at Graz University makes a contribution and oversees the development of trainer seminars in Europe. Training centres are also to be established at seven Egyptian universities that shall serve to provide the necessary training for teachers in public schools. Here Egyptian professors are supposed to be trained on topics such as sustainable development, water, biodiversity, energy, agriculture and innovative teaching methods. In the project's run-up phase teaching materials for pupils from ten to 14 years are to be developed.

In October a project meeting was held in Cairo. As participants in the meeting, we were also given the chance to visit a public school. It told us vividly of what can happen to an educational environment under very difficult conditions. Overcrowded classes with more than 60 students are not uncommon. Teaching materials are scarce and teachers are often inadequately trained. Interactive teaching methods are hardly ever used.

We also got the chance to visit a private school in a suburb of Cairo in comparison. This school for the upper middle classes enrolls students in accordance with a catalogue of strict eligibility criteria and its curriculum is based on the Cambridge system. During our visit students worked in small groups supervised by two well-trained teachers. Classes were held in English and the equipment left nothing to be desired. However, we missed a direct reference to Egypt, the societal origins of the students, their circumstances of life, and to local challenges.

The SEKEM school represents a very different school model which really impressed us. As part of our tour around its premises, Mr. Gamal, the headmaster, introduced us to its philosophy. Education for sustainable development is a top priority in SEKEM. Starting with the toys of preschool children that are made from natural materials to stimulate imagination and creativity, to the interactive teaching methods that address the individual strengths and weaknesses of the students. A respectful way of dealing with each other plays an important role just as the training in the artistic disciplines and the many opportunities given to students to be creative and try out new skills. The school intends to make a contribution to a society that actively and responsibly shapes its environment, a realm cultivated by fair inter-personal relations and prudent management of natural resources.

We strongly hope that EduCamp will contribute to fostering this mission.

Marlene and Clemens Mader

! More information:
<http://www.educamp.edu>

Impressions from SEKEM



The licorice was recently named Medicinal Plant of the Year 2012. It is sweeter than sugar and allegedly helps with overcoming many ailments. With more than 400 ingredients, for example, it is effective against cough and raspy voice and promotes the healing of gastric ulcers.

About 40 tons of licorice are produced by SEKEM every year. They come from the oasis of Wahat Bahareya, where a contract manufacturer has long been producing it directly for SEKEM. In about 2 years SEKEM will then be able to harvest the plant on their own farm as soon as the first licorice plants are ready. SEKEM's own company „Lotus“ then delivers the licorice to Germany and the Netherlands for further processing and also SEKEM's phytopharmaceutical firm ATOS receives large share. Each of the former receives around 10 tons per year. Smaller quantities are shipped to France, Canada, and England. ATOS uses it in its effective natural products, especially in SEKEM's medicinal infusions.

SEKEM Receives IMPACT Business Award by GIZ

The SEKEM group was recently awarded the Business Impact Award from the GIZ (German Society for International Cooperation).

The IMPACT Award (Innovative Models to Promote Adaptation to Climate change and climate-friendly Technologies) is presented to companies that develop and apply innovative business solutions in the fight against climate change. The prize is presented on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and awarded by the German Society for International Cooperation.

Each year up to five winners receive the well-known distinction that aims to boost their involvement in sustainable development and encourage their responsible business practice with the well-being of all mankind in mind.



The winners of 2011 include producers of solar products, companies that engage in the implementation of „off-grid communities“ in India, and a business producing bio-pharmaceutical and textile products. The GIZ selects exemplary business models that offer promising products, services or technologies for combating climate change or that help adapt to its impact in developing countries and emerging markets. Each winner is awarded with 5.000 Euro in prize money.

Source: GIZ

! More information:
<http://www.gc21.de/ibt/en/modules/gc21/ws-FLEXdialogue/info/ibt/index.sxhtml>

SEKEM Company ISIS Foods Relaunches Web Site

SEKEM’s business ISIS, distributor of food products, fresh fruit and vegetables, has inaugurated its new Internet Web site at www.isisorganic.com. Together with the new site the largest company of the SEKEM Group launches its redesigned Facebook presence.

The website not only shows off the full range of the company’s products, but also provides background information on the relationship between sustainability and organic farming to interested visitors. In the future, the developers plan to add even more data on topics related to organic and „GMO-free“ agriculture. By the end of January 2012, the new offering will also be available in Arabic.



On the new Facebook page ISIS is presenting its core strength: its experience in sustainable food production and organic agriculture. In addition, the company offers its visitors timely news from the firm at its various Egyptian sites. In the future, additional functionality shall be offered for mobile devices through software („apps“) making it possible to learn more about the work and products of ISIS and SEKEM and to understand why “organic” is not only a marketing fad but a way to better livelihoods for everyone.

The new site has been received well by consumers and business partners.

Source: ISIS Food

! More information:
<http://www.isisorganic.com>

ATOS Successfully Passes cGMP Audit

A committee of the Egyptian Health Authority recently visited SEKEM’s firm ATOS and carried out the required investigations to grant it accreditation in accordance with the global cGMP standard. cGMP stands for „Current Good Manufacturing Practice“ is particularly relevant to ATOS’ medical production plants including a newly erected facility.



Thus, the focus of the tests was put on the accreditation of the new pharmaceutical factory. “Everything went smoothly”, Christophe Floride, a member of the board of ATOS, says. And as the picture above shows, even when dealing with dry topics such as safety in a production facility there is always plenty of opportunity for a good laugh.

Source: ATOS

Masthead:
 The editors of SEKEM Insight wish to thank all contributors to this issue.

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 Seite 1: Bijan Kafi; 2, 5: SEKEM; 3, 4: Martina Dinkel; 6: Christophe Floride.

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