



Metal Cutting Mechanic trainees together with their instructors at SPA GmbH in Suhl © SPA GmbH

## Creating Sustainability—Successful UAE-German Training Cooperation

### SPA - Simson Private Akademie

Located in the middle of Germany—in the “Green Heart” as the state of Thuringia is called due to its extensive forests—there is the city of Suhl. It has been the temporary home for more than 150 students and trainees from the United Arab Emirates who have participated in different training programs. Funded by the government of Abu Dhabi, these programs have been realized in the workshops and classrooms of the private training provider Simson Private Akademie GmbH, in cooperation with Merkel Jagd- und Sportwaffen GmbH, which belongs to the TAWAZUN Holding in the UAE. These programs have a direct impact on the consolidation of the VET system in the Arab Emirates where graduates help to promote further partnerships between the UAE and Germany.

### “Hands on” for prospective engineers

Since 2008, Simson Private Akademie hosts mechanical engineering students from the UAE University in Al Ain. This pilot project has been the beginning of a steady cooperation, which lasts—and has expanded—until today. Based on a cooperation agreement with the University of Applied Sciences in Schmalkalden, the students receive practical

training sessions in the modern workshops of the Simson Private Akademie in Suhl. The work-based learning starts with hand fitting techniques like filing and sawing and ends with the operation of conventional milling and turning machines. These basic skills are required in the entire metal-processing sector and the future engineers acquire necessary basic practical experience during their five months stay in Germany.



H.E. Juma Mubarak Al Junaibi, former Ambassador of the UAE in Germany, visited the trainees from Abu Dhabi in Suhl © SPA GmbH

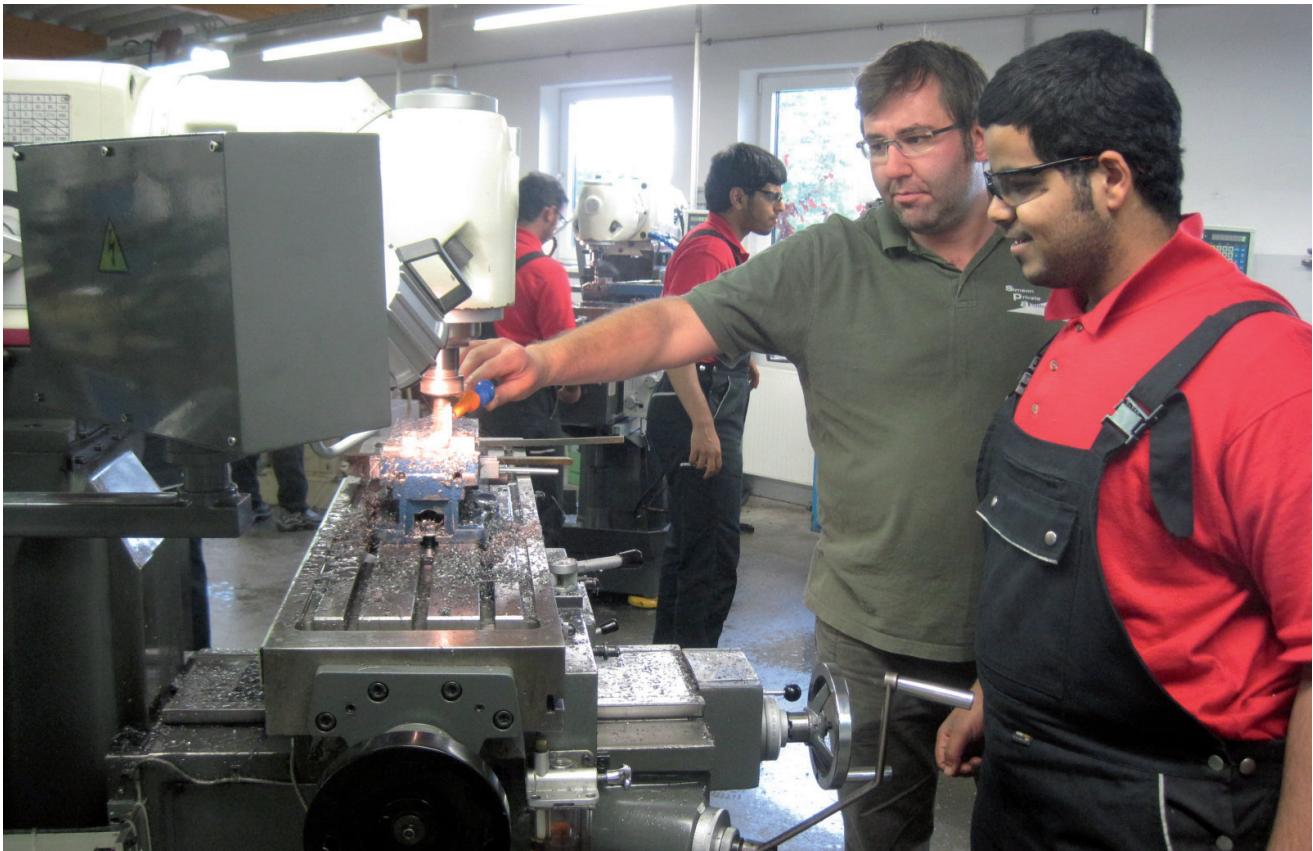
The relation between building up professional competencies and developing soft skills like problem solving and team ability is essential for programs like this. For one, living with German host families helps the young Emiratis to learn and understand a new culture from within. Outdoor team-building activities conducted by professional trainers, on the other hand, enhance the personal as well as interpersonal skills of each participant. These are just two more pillars of the program—beside metal training—which help to create a unique, overall experience.

## Creating local manpower for the manufacturing industry

For leading the local industry to be competitive on the world market, it is not enough to focus only on local engineers. There is one thing, which is just as important: local skilled workers. It is not a secret that technical jobs in the gulf region are largely outsourced to foreign guest workers. The far-sighted government of the UAE strongly promotes training programs aiming at the nationalization of vocational jobs. Under this umbrella, Simson Private Akademie was engaged to train metal cutting mechanics according to

the renowned regulations of the German “dual training system”. This is the second program that takes place in Suhl, entirely designed for the training of UAE nationals. The industrial sector in the UAE recognized that there are huge gaps between theoretical knowledge that students gain at universities and colleges and the practical working skills needed in the companies. The German dual training system can close these gaps and also provides a variety of opportunities for continuous professional development. The target is to create experts with high-level operational and theoretical skills who act as foundation for premium product quality of the manufacturing industry.

One important fact of the vocational program’s success is that the whole training is being delivered in Germany. Course participants are assigned to local companies of the manufacturing sector to do internships. The mixture of theoretical and practical training, the interaction of classroom sessions and on-the-job training guarantees the greatest possible effect of vocational training programs like this.



Practical experience for future mechanical engineers with a milling machine © SPA GmbH

From the first day when the trainees from the UAE are in Germany they receive advice and support in the unfamiliar cultural environment, handling the challenges sufficiently at ease, so as to be able to concentrate on attaining new skills and competencies.

Until now six graduates of this program are back in their companies in the UAE applying the competencies learned in Germany including self-responsibility and team skills which are indispensable as proper preparation for their future job roles as supervisors or manufacturing managers. Only recently, the German certificates issued by the Chamber of Industry and Commerce (IHK) have been accredited by the respective authorities in the UAE so that there are a lot of career opportunities, too. The experience of the graduates of the German program is considered very valuable to build up local industries and improve training processes on the spot. This program is—as far as we know—unique in the Middle East region. It enables young people to work in the workplace and it strengthens the ties between both countries—UAE and Germany. An obvious win-win situation.

## “Producing” skilled workforce—the key to success

Work-based competencies can only be achieved by work-based learning. Therefore, the close cooperation with industrial companies is a key factor regarding sustainable vocational qualification. Nonetheless, qualified training providers like Simson Private Akademie can do a lot to create real-work conditions for their course participants—whether they are engineering students, trainees or foreign trainers—to prepare them properly for the national examinations. Almost all relevant technical skills and competencies can be trained in the institute’s workshop. First of all, the trainees have to learn the basic hand-fitting techniques, which contain filing, sawing, chiseling, and drilling. How to operate lathes and milling machines, working with CNC programs, producing technical drawings using a CAD system, welding and fabrication, surface treatment—all these topics are part of the vocational training program which enables the candidates to work reliably in respective companies. Furthermore, the trainees learn the German language and a lot about German culture through the interaction with the German instructors, classmates, host families, etc.

The government of Abu Dhabi invests a lot in training programs and joint ventures with German providers and companies. However, training sessions are not only delivered in Germany, but testing and recruitment programs are also established on the spot—in dedicated training facilities which are operated by public or private entities. On a regular basis, Simson Private Akademie, for instance, sends qualified trainers and instructors to Abu Dhabi providing hands-on training sessions for young men without any prior technical experience. Producing workpieces with hand-fitting techniques like filling, sawing and drilling, combined with instructions in technical drawing and some basic English language for the workplace, is the principle of this ten-weeks program. On the one hand, these programs pursue the goal of increasing the number of technicians working for one of the many new production plants in the rapidly emerging country. On the other hand, this type of short-term courses serve as a testing-tool to assess the candidates' technical skills and competencies as well as kindling their interest in working in a technical environment with a variety of career opportunities. Suitable candidates have the chance to participate in a training program in Germany for further improvement of their skills and abilities in a continuing training course on the spot.

Obviously, the German system—especially the “dual training system”—is quite popular in the Arab world. And the projects of the Simson Private Akademie and its clients in the UAE serve as best-practice evidence of this popularity: a continuous and growing commitment to support international collaboration in the field of vocational education and training, which is always the backbone of successful and sustainable economic growth.



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Participants of the basic metal training course in Al Ain, UAE © SPA GmbH

