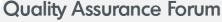European Training Foundation

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN LEBANON

ETF Forum Member Institution: Directorate General of Vocational and Technical Education

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Quality Assurance Forum
THE ETF FORUM FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE
IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 National context

Lebanon is an upper middle-income economy with one of the highest gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in the region: USD 13 058 in 2018. However, one-third of its population lives below the poverty line. The conflict in Syria has massively contributed to this situation by adding 1.5 million registered Syrians to the existing 450 000 Palestinian refugees, making Lebanon the country with the highest number of refugees-per-capita in the world.

Lebanon is characterised by its unique political setting: a balance of powers among the different religious groups. The ongoing protests combining political and economic grievances are asking to bring down the country's sectarian political system. The so-called revolution started in October 2019 and three weeks after, the government resigned; as of February 2020, a new government has been formed and has the confidence of parliament.

The labour market is characterised by low employment rates, limited labour force participation (especially of young people and women), an increasingly large informal sector, a high influx of foreign workers and refugees, and a large number of skilled Lebanese seeking and obtaining employment abroad.

1.2 Statistics

TABLE 1. POPULATION

	Size of population	Size of youth population (15–24, %)
2010	4 953 061	28.8
2014	6 262 410	27.9
2018	6 848 925	26.4

Source: World Bank World Development Indicators: estimates based on age/sex distributions of United Nations Population Division's World Population Prospects: 2019 Revision

TABLE 2. EMPLOYMENT

	Employment rate (15+, %)	Employment rate of young people (15–24, %)
2012	44.7	N/A
2018	43.3[1]	30[2]

Notes: 1. ETF calculations; 2. 2019 labour force survey

Source: Committee on the Application of Standards, in cooperation with the International Labour Organisation (ILO)

TABLE 3. EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF ACTIVE POPULATION (% AGED 15+)

	Low	Medium	High
2012	66.5	15.3	17.9

Note: Low – International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) 0–2; Medium – ISCED 3–4;
High – ISCED 5–8
Source: Eurostat

TABLE 4. PARTICIPATION IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) (STUDENTS IN VOCATIONAL PROGRAMMES AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL UPPER SECONDARY STUDENTS

	Upper secondary (ISCED 3) VET
2010	27.4
2014	27.2
2018	25.9

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

TABLE 5. SPENDING ON GENERAL EDUCATION AND VET

	Spending on ISCED 3–4 all education (including VET) as % of GDP
2010	1.6
2012	2.2

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

1.3 The VET system

Governance and management

The Directorate General of Vocational and Technical Education (DGVTE) in the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) is the sole decision-maker and monitors all VET-related issues with the exception of specific short vocational training courses that fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and the National Employment Office. In particular, the DGVTE is in charge of developing the whole vocational education system to ensure its relevance to the labour market needs and economic context, managing the vocational schools and institutes, and monitoring all the private providers.

A Higher VET Council composed of representatives of different ministries and local and economic organisations was established to provide advice to the MEHE on policies and strategic development plans, regulations and budgets; however, this does not seem to be very effective as it met only once in 2018.

The VET system remains highly centralised with little autonomy given to the schools or the respective organisations involved in shaping the system. Governance, financing, institutional arrangements and coordination among actors are the major challenges for the effectiveness and development of the VET sector in Lebanon.

Financing

The General Public Budget is the main financing source for public VET, with its management controlled by the DGVTE. Secondary sources of funding include tuition and examination fees collected by schools as well as donations from national and international organisations.

Through annual reports, directors of vocational schools submit their annual budget along with requirements through standard budget item forms. Once collected, the DGVTE consolidates all requests and submits them to the Ministry, which in turn applies some adjustments as required and submits them to the Council of Ministers for final approval.

Regulatory frameworks

The development and adoption of a National Strategic Framework for Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Lebanon (NSF 2018–2022) has been a major milestone for the government in its effort to improve the TVET system. The strategy focuses on three main axes: (i) improve access and service delivery; (ii) enhance quality and relevance of TVET provision; and (iii) improve TVET governance and systems.

The strategy has been the result of a wide range of consultations involving a variety of stakeholders from the public sector (ministries, institutions with a mandate in VET), the private sector and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

An action plan for the DGVTE has been developed based on the National Strategic Framework, led by the MEHE, the DGVTE, and with support of international organisations (such as GIZ, UNICEF, the ILO and the IECD). The plan is currently waiting for validation from the director general.

Main provider institution types

One characteristic of the education and training system in Lebanon is the high proportion of private providers: 60% of vocational schools are private. There are two types of private providers: non-profit and for-profit schools. The non-profit private vocational schools are mainly run by charitable and social work NGOs. These NGOs are mostly community based, with strong regional and religious ties. NGOs have been the developers of this sector since the 1950s, even before the creation of the DGVTE.

The larger for-profit private vocational schools are concentrated around the major cities and population centres, and offer highly competitive training. Some belong to European or North American networks and provide internationally recognised degrees and certificates guaranteed by recognised quality control systems and credentials.

Main provision/programme types

TVET provision is mainly school-based in Lebanon. A dual system exists as a separate stream leading to a specific qualification.

Main qualifications according to ISCED levels

The formal VET system in Lebanon offers the following qualifications:

- Vocational Brevet (BP – brevet professionnel): accessible to students who have completed the first year of intermediate general education (vocational stream). It corresponds to ISCED 2.

- Technical Baccalaureate (BT – baccalauréat technique): offered to students at the intermediate level or holders of a BP (technical stream). It corresponds to ISCED 3.
- Higher Technician Diploma (TS – technicien supérieur): offered to holders of a secondary education diploma (technical stream). It corresponds to ISCED 4.
- Technical Licence (licence technique): offered to holders of a TS diploma (technical stream). It corresponds to ISCED 4.
- Teaching Technical Licence (licence d'enseignement technique): for those who meet the requirements for a TS diploma. It corresponds to ISCED 4.

2. QUALITY ASSURANCE IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2.1 Overview

A comprehensive quality assurance system for VET is still lacking, despite recent efforts by relevant national authorities. With the exception of 'accelerated' vocational training, the DGVTE accredits VET providers and programmes through a dedicated commission that checks the implementation of official programmes as well as premises and equipment. Private VET providers need DGVTE accreditation to operate and must follow DGVTE programmes. Students in public and private VET must take the national examinations endorsed by the DGVTE.

There is a growing awareness about the importance of quality assurance and commitment towards a number of bottom-up initiatives in which quality assurance features significantly.

2.2 General information on quality assurance at VET system level

Quality assurance is considered a tool to accredit providers and programmes, and therefore a tool to monitor VET provision at system and school level. At system level, the country is missing such a tool to monitor the overall VET system and its key areas. The lack of data does not help in addressing that.

2.3 Quality assurance related to key VET areas

Evidence – statistics, and research and development

Lebanon suffers from a serious lack of data at all levels. Labour market data and figures are scarce, incomplete, outdated and in some cases contradictory. The last official census was in 1932. Other unofficial censuses were conducted, for instance in 1956, but the results were not published to preserve the fragile political consensus among the different religious groups.

It is important to note that the ILO recently finalised, jointly with the Committee on the Application of Standards, the labour force survey funded by the European Union. At the end of 2019, the Committee made available the preliminary key findings from the labour force survey carried out in 2018–19. It is not yet clear if it will be a regular exercise.

There is still no labour market information system, and the National Employment Office lacks the human and financial capacity to collect data on jobseekers, vacancies and labour market absorption, or even to register the jobseekers. A systematic data collection system to track labour market

absorption capacity and to analyse the trends would allow better matching of labour market demand with graduate supply, thereby making it possible to properly address skills shortages and skills mismatch, to guide VET curricula as per labour market needs and to ease the school-to-work transition.

The shortage and a lack of accurate data in the VET sector is hampering planning, implementation and monitoring of policies and measures in the same way.

Quality assurance and the qualifications cycle

The DGVTE manages the development and implementation of VET curricula and qualifications. Public and private VET providers follow centralised regulations on curricula, state examinations and qualifications. A proliferation of private universities and NGOs offer similar programmes, all providing certificates upon course completion. Quality measures for DGVTE qualifications generally fall short of a quality assurance approach and apart from individual donor-led projects, the social partners are not fully involved in quality assurance measures related to qualifications. Overall, the national examination is the main mechanism for monitoring qualifications standards.

Minimum quality assurance procedures are in place for VET qualifications. The Arab Standard Classification of Occupations is used on an ad hoc basis. In 2015, the ILO worked with the National Employment Office and the Ministry of Labour to develop a Standard Occupational Classification system with the aim of developing labour market policies. The proposal is still pending a final decision.

Development of the Lebanese National Qualifications Framework (LNQF) began in 2012. However, beyond donor-supported technical work and despite having official endorsement, the LNQF has remained at the conceptual stage for a long time due to the lack of legal/institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement.

An important development in this field is Decision # 374/M/2019, issued by the MEHE to adopt the LNQF for VET at six levels. The decision defined the chart including the different TVET learning levels and descriptors along with monitoring schemes as per those indicated in the National Strategic Framework, based on the joint work between UNICEF, the DGVTE and the focal point of TVET in the MEHE. Application of the framework was supposed to start in academic year 2019/20.

Quality assurance and VET provision/provider institutions

The DGVTE accredits VET providers and programmes and oversees public vocational schools. Adherence to regulations is monitored by limited inspection. Quality measures relate more to a traditional centralised quality control rather than a real attempt to improve outcomes through a quality assurance approach. An effective monitoring system is lacking for evaluating the programmes taught and highlighting areas for potential improvement.

Public VET providers carry out an annual internal evaluation. The DGVTE requires an annual report on activities carried out, equipment purchased, identified needs, and a general evaluation of teacher performances. However, the evaluation reports, which are sent to the DGVTE, do not contribute to regular monitoring of the VET system or of individual schools/teachers.

New VET providers, both public and private, are subject to approval in stages, from addressing building infrastructure to curricula. Adherence to Ministry regulations is monitored by limited inspection.

The large numbers of private training providers have management and funding independence but need DGVTE accreditation (mainly a check of premises and equipment) to operate and must use national programmes, enter students for the national examinations, and get DGVTE endorsement for the appointment of a principal. Once accredited, there is no further provision for inspection. There is no formal internal evaluation of the programmes delivered or of the teaching staff.

Quality assurance and VET teacher/trainer qualifications standards and continuing professional development

In line with the laws and regulations pertaining to the recruitment of public servants, TVET teachers have to pass a national examination set by the civil service board for their appointment or recruitment. Once successful, teachers become full-time employees as part of the TVET human resource system and receive a full-time contract.

To fill in the gaps in terms of recruitment, part-time or contractual teachers are hired by the school directors. There is no legal framework for organising the recruitment of TVET teachers on a contractual basis, and thus no pre-requisites or criteria for selection of teachers. Part-time teachers account for the majority of teaching hours (roughly 90% in 2017/18).

An annual evaluation is carried out for teachers, systematically, but is not very effective. The method of evaluation is more qualitative and subjective, often done by school directors, based on the evaluators' own perspectives and general consideration of factors such as teaching methods, interaction and adherence to curricula. All evaluations are documented and sent to the DGVTE along with other annual reports; however, no decision is taken regarding teachers who receive particularly good or bad evaluations.

The National Training Institution for Technical Education is the official institution in charge of training and graduating teachers for VET. However, currently the institution is unable to fulfil its role due to limited financial capacity and availability of qualified trainers to implement the training programmes for teachers, especially for technical subjects.

3. STRENGTHS, DEVELOPMENTS, NEEDS

The LNQF awaits full implementation despite the progress indicated above.

The Action Plan for VET – currently pending DGVTE endorsement – includes measures to employ more high-quality teachers/trainers with relevant practical work experience, and the introduction of continuing training programmes.

To assure the quality of VET, the following needs to be done:

- develop, resource and implement a quality assurance approach/framework for the VET system;
- develop effective demand/supply information systems with mechanisms to give feedback to the VET system for improvement;
- update VET curricula/qualifications (Technical Baccalaureate in process, Higher Technician Diploma already finished) to meet labour market demand and establish mechanisms for the effective involvement of social partners in the definition of skills needs, especially in light of the modernisation process of curricula currently ongoing;
- develop quality assurance mechanisms related to the training and ongoing capacity building needs of VET personnel;
- increase the autonomy and accountability of public sector VET providers.

4. GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

A dedicated department exists at DGVTE level for information/statistics gathering and data can be consulted, but this is paper-based only.

The DGVTE accredits VET providers and programmes. Public VET providers carry out an annual internal evaluation. The DGVTE collects and evaluates annual reports on activities carried out, equipment purchased, identified needs, and a general evaluation of teacher performances.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

BP   Brevet professionnel (Vocational Brevet)

BT   Baccalauréat technique (Technical Baccalaureate)

DGVTE   Directorate General of Vocational and Technical Education

ETF   European Training Foundation

GDP   Gross domestic product

IECD   Institut européen de coopération et de développement

ILO   International Labour Organisation

ISCED   International Standard Classification of Education

LNQF   Lebanese National Qualifications Framework

MEHE   Ministry of Education and Higher Education

NGOs   Non-governmental organisations

TS   Technicien supérieur (Higher Technician Diploma)

TVET   Technical vocational education and training

VET   Vocational education and training

Where to
find out more

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