

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN JORDAN

ETF Forum Member Institution:
Technical and Vocational Skills Development
Commission

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 National context

Jordan is a small country with a total area of 89,318 square kilometres and a population of 10 million inhabitants in 2018. This includes 2 million refugees and migrant workers. In terms of economic development, Jordan is considered a lower-middle-income country that has an open economy with an emerging market.

The economy is dominated by the service sector, which contributed two-thirds of Jordan's GDP in 2017, while industry contributed 25% and the agricultural sector contributed 4%. The GDP growth rate has continued to decline over the last few years, falling from 3.1% in 2014 to 2% in 2017.

The labour market is characterised by a persistently high unemployment rate particularly among young women, a low activity rate particularly among women, a significant informal sector (44% of total employment) and a high number of migrant workers.

1.2 Statistics

TABLE 1. POPULATION

	Size of population	Relative size of youth population (15–24, %)
2010	6,698,000	32.1
2014	8,804,000	32.1
2018	10,053,000	32.1

Source: Department of Statistics (DOS), online database; 2017 Census publication

TABLE 2. EMPLOYMENT

	Employment rate (overall, %)	Employment rate of young people (15–24, %)
2010	34.5	19.1
2014	32.1	16.1
2017	29.5	15.0

Source: DOS, labour force survey online database (2017, 2018: ETF calculation based on DOS)

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

	Low	Medium	High
2010	50.5	23.1	26.3
2014	50.9	21.2	27.9
2017	49.2	17.3	33.5

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

Source: ETF calculation based on DOS, labour force survey online database

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	12.4
2014	13.1
2018	11.5

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

1.3 The VET system

Governance and management

The recently established Technical and Vocational Skills Development Commission is the sector's main governing body. It is responsible for approving the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector's strategies, policies and plans, suggesting laws related to the TVET sector, approving occupational standards, and coordinating with other educational, economic, social and human resources councils. The commission is also responsible for the accreditation and supervision of TVET providers, the development of TVET programme standards, and the registration of qualifications within the national qualifications framework.

The establishment of the commission is one of the recommendations of the national strategy for human resources development adopted in 2016. The former E-TVET Council, the E-TVET Fund, and the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Centre have been disbanded and replaced by the Technical and Vocational Skills Development Commission.

The commission is dominated by public-sector representatives (e.g. ministries and public providers).

For the time being, the system remains fragmented and governed by different bodies with little coordination. The Al-Balqa Applied University (BAU) is still the overarching umbrella for Jordan's community colleges, whereas vocational education schools fall entirely under the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and vocational centres fall under the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC).

Financing

The public budget is the main source of funding for the VTC and the Ministry of Education. The revenues generated by the schools' own activities and from VTC trainee fees remain modest. Development funding is lacking, and there are rigid, highly centralised procedures for the financial management of the allocated budget at the level of schools and regional administrations.

The situation is different for community colleges, because their main funding source is student fees, which are supplemented by the public budget. BAU receives budget support from the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research and it allocates funds to public community colleges based on historical trends, student numbers and staffing levels.

Training providers can get additional funds for their developmental projects from the E-TVET Fund¹, which is currently being replaced by the TVET and skills development support fund. The E-TVET Fund has been one of the main sources of funding for active labour market policies.

Regulatory frameworks

The TVET sector in Jordan is regulated by a set of laws. The most important are the following:

- The law on technical and vocational skills development, which was adopted in 2019, authorised the newly established Technical and Vocational Skills Development Commission to accredit, supervise, evaluate and license TVET providers including technical education providers.
- Several laws that have established the comprehensive stream and the applied stream (within the secondary-education system) mandate the VTC to provide both initial and continuing vocational training opportunities to prepare and upgrade the technical workforce in different areas of work to non-academic qualifications levels, while also mandating higher education institutions (community colleges and universities) to provide technical education.
- Finally, a law was adopted in 2019 to establish a national qualifications framework.

The National Strategy for Human Resources Development 2016–2025 sets the strategy for the sector. The strategy views TVET as one of the main areas to be addressed to develop human resources in the country, alongside early childhood, primary and secondary education, and higher education.

Within the TVET area, the National Strategy for Human Resources Development identifies five strategic objectives relating to access, quality, accountability, innovation and mind-set. So far, however, no implementation plans have been designed for the strategy. This is one of the tasks that awaits the newly established Technical and Vocational Skills Development Commission.

Main provider institution types²

The TVET system in Jordan is dominated by public providers. At the same time, there are also a large number of VET private centres and schools that offer training in a wide range of specialisations, although very few have been accredited by the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Centre and no record is kept of their exact number.

¹ The E-TVET Fund has relied on a deduction of JOD 70 (EUR 85) from every guest worker's permit granted to foreign labour.

² Examples: public or private, educational institution (e.g. school) or company (e.g. car manufacturer).

Most of the programmes delivered by the VTC and the National Employment and Training Company (NET) are conducted using the apprenticeship training scheme, which is run in cooperation with companies and enterprises. The Ministry of Education's programmes are school-based with a placement of 24 days over the summer holidays either in a workplace or in a school's workshops.

At the technical level, some community colleges started in the academic year 2018/19 to provide technical programmes of two to three years that include on-the-job training for one to two semesters.

Main provision/programme types

The TVET system in Jordan offers the following programmes:

- Vocational training, mainly provided through the VTC, focusing largely on the practical part. Similar programmes are also offered by NET and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).
- Vocational education provided by the Ministry of Education as part of the formal educational system in Jordan. Upon successful completion, students receive a general secondary certificate.
- Technical education, provided by Al-Balqa Applied University, the private sector, the army and UNRWA community colleges. Technical education programmes, which are two to three years in length, lead to a comprehensive technical/intermediate university diploma. Also, community colleges have recently started to provide a vocational diploma through training programmes that are one to two years in length.

Main qualifications according to ISCED levels

Several qualifications are offered by the Jordanian TVET system.

- Semi-skilled, skilled and craftsman level certificates, which correspond to ISCED levels 2, 3 and 4, respectively. These qualifications are awarded by VTC, NET and some accredited private training providers;
- A general secondary education certificate, which is awarded to students who have completed secondary vocational education. The certificate corresponds to ISCED level 3.
- A technical/intermediate university diploma, which is awarded by community colleges after technical education programmes that are two to three years in length. The diploma corresponds to ISCED level 5.
- A vocational diploma, which is awarded by community colleges following a training programme that is one to two years in length. The diploma corresponds to ISCED level 4.

2. QUALITY ASSURANCE IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2.1 Overview

The National Strategy for Human Resources Development has well summed up the quality assurance system in Jordan: 'Quality assurance of TVET in Jordan is highly fragmented, with separate quality assurance processes and bodies in each of the three Ministries involved with TVET provision.' Each institution has its own mechanisms for data collection, monitoring and evaluation.

The two institutions in charge of quality assurance in the country, namely the former Accreditation and Quality Assurance Centre and the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education Institutions (AQACHEI), use different criteria and approaches when registering qualifications.

The recently established Technical and Vocational Skills Development Commission may bring more consistency to the task.

2.2 General information on quality assurance at VET system level

Quality assurance approaches and measures differ by sub-sector. The Ministry of Education's procedures apply in schools under its authority, whereas VTC centres have separate procedures and community colleges follow the procedures set by AQACHEI. In general, quality assurance is limited to internal quality control. There is little external quality control or evaluation.

2.3 Quality assurance related to key VET areas

Evidence – statistics, and research and development

The Department of Statistics remains the main provider of data on the labour market and employment in Jordan.

Another important player is the National Centre for Human Resources Development, which has been carrying out a series of 18 sectoral studies in recent years in order to analyse the skills needs of sectors and the training provision. In addition, the centre publishes an annual bulletin of human resources indicators that covers a variety of indicators in the fields of demography, education and the labour market.

A third source of information on the labour market is the National Electronic Employment System, which provides an online platform to match jobseekers and employers' needs. Jordanian companies can register their available vacancies directly online together with the required qualification, work experience, age and gender as well as the salaries on offer and any additional incentives.

There is no evidence that TVET institutions have used the results of the above-mentioned resources to inform improvements in their TVET policies and programmes.

At an institutional level, some TVET providers, such as the VTC and to a lesser extent the Ministry of Education, conduct tracer studies that include feedback from employers and graduates on the skills needed. However, there is no evidence that the results are used to inform policymakers in this case either.

Finally, with the support of some international organisations, several sector skills councils are being established. These bodies are consultative councils that represent employers, employees and the government and they are tasked with the identification of skills and training needs in different sectors.

Despite the existence of all these bodies producing information on the labour market, Jordan still lacks a comprehensive system to identify and anticipate labour market needs linked with education in general and the TVET system in particular.

Quality assurance and the qualifications cycle

The three sub-systems, namely vocational education (Ministry of Education), vocational training (VTC) and technical education (BAU/community colleges), use different approaches to design qualifications.

At the level of VTC, the curricula of training programmes are developed centrally using the Arab Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO 2008), occupational standards or the DACUM methodology.

Qualifications appear to be defined by inputs rather than learning outcomes.

Quality assurance and VET provision/provider institutions

The Ministry of Education and the VTC have separate quality control procedures, while community colleges follow AQACHEI procedures. In general, the procedures focus on internal quality control, looking at competence within establishments in terms of inputs, processes and outputs. There is little external quality control or evaluation of the effectiveness of institutions' outputs. Institutions and trainers are not held accountable for training outcomes. Funds are transferred to public institutions based on previous budgets, regardless of performance.

The Accreditation and Quality Assurance Centre used to be responsible for the licensing and accreditation of public and private TVET institutions and programmes. The centre's focus was on private providers and it had an external quality control guide for training providers. The accreditation of private providers should now be taken on board by the Technical and Vocational Skills Development Commission, which has absorbed the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Centre.

Rigidly centralised governance procedures mean that TVET providers, apart from the private sector, have little delegated responsibility to form local partnerships or respond to local labour market or social needs.

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

The teachers and trainers of the Ministry of Education and the VTC are appointed through the Civil Service Bureau.

Secondary education teachers are required to have at least a bachelor's degree and a one-year postgraduate diploma. However, practical or workshop teachers may have only an intermediate college diploma or work experience.

The required qualification to be appointed as a VTC trainer is an intermediate college diploma, but in some vocational fields where such qualifications are not available, trainers with lower qualifications can be recruited, provided they have sufficient related work experience.

Teachers and trainers in the VTC and Ministry of Education are usually civil servants working on a full-time employment basis. In some cases, teachers and trainers can be hired on a temporary basis as part of a training project or initiative or to cover a shortage of required teaching staff in schools or institutes. In this case, they are hired for a limited period either on a full-time or part-time basis.

In general, teachers and trainers lack practical experience and appropriate pedagogical skills. To address a shortage of qualified trainers, the VTC is recruiting trainers with practical experience but without pedagogical qualifications.

Regarding technical education in BAU community colleges, technical theory teachers are required to have at least a B.Sc. under the accreditation criteria of AQACHEI, while workshop trainers are required to have an intermediate college diploma.

In terms of professional development, TVET providers use different approaches. The VTC approach seems to be more comprehensive and structured because all newly appointed trainers have to attend a four-week training programme and there is quite a rigorous process of needs analysis, programme design and implementation in place.

As for the performance evaluation of trainers and teachers, the school principal evaluates the Ministry of Education's teachers in accordance with the regulations of the Civil Service Bureau, while external supervisors provide feedback on technical performance. A good evaluation is a prerequisite for promotion. An annual evaluation of VTC trainers is done based on ongoing assessments in accordance with Civil Service Bureau regulations. External coordinators evaluate technical aspects of trainer performance based on criteria that include trainee dropout, success and employment rates. In community colleges, teachers and trainers receive feedback from students.

3. STRENGTHS, DEVELOPMENTS, NEEDS

New developments – in progress/in the pipeline

The adoption of the law on technical and vocational skills development in 2019 has been by far the most important development in the TVET sector in Jordan. The law provides a legal framework for the engagement of employers in TVET governance, resourcing and implementation.

Needs

In order to improve quality assurance in the TVET sector, there is a need to:

- address gaps and delays in legislation related to quality assurance;
- consider how to devolve a measure of decision-making to local management, while putting in place suitable safeguards and accountability measures;
- address centralised financial management procedures and the lack of incentives to improve system performance;
- develop demand/supply information systems with feedback loops for TVET improvement;
- evaluate and improve the effectiveness of professional development opportunities for TVET personnel.

4. GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

An integrated human resources strategy, which was adopted in 2016, seeks to ensure relevant skills for employment and entrepreneurship. The strategy sets out specific objectives, including a clear governance structure; pathways for transition between sectors; consistent training for TVET teachers and the alignment of standards and quality assurance measures for all institutions; closer coordination between VET institutions and the private sector; innovative funding approaches; and increased TVET attractiveness. Several projects have been identified to achieve these objectives. Currently there is no timetable for the implementation of the strategy.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AQACHEI	Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education Institutions
BAU	Al-Balqa Applied University
DOS	Department of Statistics
ETF	European Training Foundation
E-TVET	Employment-Technical and vocational education and training
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross domestic product
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
JOD	Jordanian dinar (currency)
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VET	Vocational education and training
VTC	Vocational Training Corporation

Where to find out more

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