QUALITY ASSURANCE IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN PALESTINE*

ETF Forum Member Institution: Ministry of Education

March 2020

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

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 National context

Palestine is a fragile state, subject to Israeli military occupation, limiting its ability to grow and develop. Geographically, the Palestinian territories consist of three areas: the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. Movement between these areas is restricted by the measures of occupation, and the Gaza Strip is under siege. The West Bank is divided into areas A, B and C, where Palestinians do not control Area C, which accounts for 60% of the West Bank[1], and hence they do not have control of water and natural resources.

The political context affects the economic situation by restricting its effectiveness and growth. The situation is further affected by Israel withholding tax funds, as well as declining donor funding and reduced support to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).

Palestine's gross domestic product (GDP) growth rate has been slowing down considerably since 2016, from 4.7% to 0.9% in 2018. GDP per capita based on purchasing power parity in 2018 was 5 148.5 international dollars, one of the lowest values in the world ranking. The service sector accounts for 63.4% of GDP, followed by industry (19.6%) and agriculture (3.2%), according to 2016 data.

According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (2018, 2019), political and economic conditions have had an impact on the social conditions that have led to increased unemployment and poverty rates.

Since assuming power in 1994, the Palestinian Authority has had responsibility for the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector.

1.2 Statistics

TABLE 1. POPULATION

	Size of population	Size of youth population (% 15–24)
2010	3 972 803	37.7
2014	4 378 425	36.5
2018	4 793 686	34.8

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019

TABLE 2. EMPLOYMENT

	Employment rate (15+)	Employment rate of young people (15–24)
2010	31.4	15.7
2014	33.5	17.7
2018	32.1	17.7

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, 2019, Labour force survey revised database 2010–18

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[1] World Bank, 2015

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

	Low	Medium	High
2010	64.0	20.9	15.1
2014	61.6	20.6	17.8
2018	58.1	21.3	20.6

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

Source: Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics

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	Post upper secondary (ISCED 4) VET
2010	6.1	N/A
2014	1.9	N/A
2018	2.3	N/A

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

TABLE 5. SPENDING ON EDUCATION AND VET

	Spending on education as % of GDP	Spending on ISCED 3–4 VET only as % of GDP
2010	6.7	N/A
2013	5.3	N/A
2017	5.3	N/A

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

1.3 The VET system

Governance and management

Until the beginning of 2019, the Higher Council for TVET, which was reactivated in 2016, approved the general policies of the TVET system in accordance with national priorities. The Council was composed of representatives of the concerned ministries, the private sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the UNRWA, all under the supervision of the Minister of Education and Higher Education (then) and the Minister of Labour. The Executive Council for TVET was responsible for the full implementation of the TVET system.

In May 2019, following a Cabinet decision, the above governance structure was halted due to its limited effectiveness. A specialised ministerial committee was formed that appointed a technical committee to come up with a new governance proposal that would unify the management of the TVET system.

The Ministry of Education (MoE), the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research (MoHE)[2] and the Ministry of Labour (MoL) regulate and accredit vocational education, technical education, and vocational training institutions and programmes respectively in addition to the Ministry of Social Development and the UNRWA, who regulate their own. According to the legal references, the MoE, MoHE and MoL are leading the sector and set its policies, with input from other stakeholders.

The key issue preventing an effective TVET system in Palestine is the lack of an effective governance system. The current governance and management structures have failed to guide the TVET sector in achieving effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the system, and did not allow the full implementation of the national strategy at the official level.

Financing

The government allocates nearly 22% of the total government spending on education at all levels. Public spending on education includes spending on schools, universities, vocational and technical education, while the government only allocated 0.5% of the 2018 general budget to VET (Ministry of Finance and Planning, 2018). This allocation is below the international standard figures.

The allocation for TVET from the public budget covers the expenses of the VET governmental institutions only. The government does not provide funding to any private sector or NGO TVET institution, except for some incentives for some NGOs.

There are other sources of funding (for governmental and non-governmental VET institutions), including:

- national and international grants and donations;
- tuition fees collected from students enrolled in TVET institutions;
- income-generating activities (productive work, services and training programmes offered in TVET institutions);
- supporting local community organisations through TVET projects;
- individual contributions.

With the exception of the dual system (apprenticeship), there is no mechanism in place to determine the contribution of employers to the TVET system.

Regulatory frameworks

The Palestinian education system is governed by a set of regulatory frameworks:

- the TVET Strategy of 1999, which was revised and ratified in 2010;
- the TVET Law is being revised by the new technical committee;
- the Education Act of 2017, with articles 9 and 11 on policies regarding TVET;
- work is under way to revise the Palestinian Labour Law, with technical support from the International Labour Organisation, through tripartite partnership with employers' and workers' representatives;
- the Education Sector Strategic Plan (2017–2022) identifies key challenges, suggested solutions and obstacles for TVET development. It also identifies targets for strategic goals of the education

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[2] At regular interval the ministries of education and higher education merged and separated again. Since April 2019, they operate (again) as two separate entities.

sector. This is an elaborated version of the Education Development Strategic Plan III (2014–2019) with its structures and priorities as well as the same assumptions, goals and objectives, but with additional focus on issues that were highlighted in the National Policy Agenda, such as preschool, TVET and scientific research;

■ the Work-Based Learning strategy of 2018.

Despite the existence of the Palestinian Labour Law of 2000, the Education Law of General Education of 2017 and the new Higher Education Law of 2018 and the provision of some articles therein, these elements of legislation do not contain sufficient tools for the development of the TVET system as a whole. Legislation is still needed to regulate VET in general which will lead to developing the TVET system as an integrated body. A national committee was formed to prepare the TVET Law, with clear aims to:

■ organise all aspects of the TVET system in Palestine, by setting up a governance system that addresses the current weaknesses of monitoring and evaluation and fragmentation of the system;
■ determine the roles, responsibilities and authorities of each component of the system in Palestine with respect to planning, implementation, monitoring and supervision, including the obligations of public and private VET providers in accordance with the requirements of this law.

Main provider institution types

As mentioned above, the TVET system in Palestine is fragmented and there are several TVET providers, including those operating under governmental responsibilities, civil society, and international (UNWRA) or private providers.

These institutions offer their TVET programmes in three ways:

■ formally: leading to an official certificate within the education system such as vocational schools and technical colleges;
■ non-formally: through support such as vocational training centres (VTCs) within the MoL, training centres affiliated to the Ministry of Social Development, and private centres;
■ informally: through individual training in the workplace or outside.

Work-based learning was expanded from 2016 to 2018, through the support of Enabel (a Belgian development agency), to more than 44 institutions; of these, only four vocational schools have implemented apprenticeship programmes, although the strategy and by-laws were adopted on the national level.

Main provision/programme types

The following formal and non-formal TVET programmes are offered at various TVET institutions.

Formal TVET programmes

1. Technical education programmes in community colleges and technical colleges lead to a qualification at level 4. Graduates can bridge to higher technical education (at level 5).
2. Vocational education programmes in vocational secondary schools and vocational units in general education schools lead to a qualification at level 3; graduates can enrol in higher education institutions. Vocational education is provided by vocational schools in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, run by the MoE and certain NGOs. In addition, there are vocational units in general education schools in the industrial, agricultural, home economics and hospitality branches.

Non-formal TVET programmes

1. Vocational training programmes in the VTCs of the MoL aim to contribute to the skilled and semi-skilled labour force in the service and industry sectors. Various vocational programmes are available in the West Bank and Gaza.

2. Vocational training programmes offered by the Ministry of Social Development in VTCs target marginalised groups, such as juveniles, early school leavers, people with disabilities and people from disadvantaged backgrounds, in addition to released prisoners. The ministry's programmes are provided in various vocations within its VTCs in the West Bank and Gaza.

3. Vocational training programmes from the UNRWA aim to prepare skilled and semi-skilled workers in a variety of vocational fields. These programmes are available for the children of refugees only.

4. Training programmes provided by NGOs are offered in TVET NGO institutions affiliated with the NGO-VET League in the West Bank and Gaza.

5. Training programmes provided by charitable organisations cover many areas, but they are concentrated in the areas of sewing, weaving and secretarial services for women.

6. Training programmes provided by private for-profit training centres deliver capacity-building training programmes and continuing VET, according to the needs of the local market.

Main qualifications according to ISCED levels

In 2018/19, a total of 299 institutions provided technical education, vocational education and vocational training programmes described in the above section, across the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Out of these, 33 institutions provided technical education (ISCED level 4) and 39 provided vocational education (ISCED level 3). Other institutions provided vocational training programmes at ISCED levels 2 and 1.

2. QUALITY ASSURANCE IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2.1 Overview

The TVET 2010 strategy addressed the issue of quality assurance and quality management with great interest and keenness in order to achieve the proposed reforms within it. The national strategy is concerned with the quality of the outputs of TVET and linking them to the needs of the labour market in order to improve employment opportunities for graduates through the optimal use of available resources. The strategy document also stressed the importance of establishing a national quality assurance authority to develop the quality system of vocational and technical education and training and to promote a culture of quality.

2.2 General information on quality assurance at VET system level

The Palestinian Council of Ministers established the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Committee (AQAC) for the purpose of licensing higher education institutions and programmes and accrediting qualifications using the quality standards. This is applied to all universities, technical colleges and their new programmes.

There are systems for accreditation and licensing of VET institutions and the adoption of their programmes, each according to the body responsible for vocational education at the MoE and vocational training at the MoL.

The Arab Occupational Classification has been adopted nationally and is used in the process of developing new vocations. The Palestinian Occupation Classification and the national qualifications system are part of the MoE and the MoL strategies. All are part of the basis of the Quality Assurance System.

VET needs a comprehensive system of accreditation, quality assurance, and accompanying systems that have been mentioned in the proposed strategy and the proposed law.

There are plans to create a policy to establish the National Authority for Accreditation and Quality System in the technical education system.

2.3   Quality assurance related to key VET areas

Evidence – statistics, and research and development

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics provides various figures and statistics covering all aspects of Palestine and its economy; this data is one of the most important inputs for policy formulation.

The 2012 labour market information system has been developed and managed by the MoL, yet has limited participation and hence forecasting ability. Sources of information include:

- employer surveys, labour office data, quantitative and qualitative forecasting of skill needs in selected sectors, and local surveys carried out by the Local Employment and Training Councils;
- under the current Youth Employability programme, UNESCO is working on a skills/occupation forecasting system;
- ad-hoc tracking studies implemented with support of donors, international organisations and NGOs;
- information from workers unions, industrial unions, professions unions and chambers of commerce.

In 2016, TVET stakeholders, supported by the European Training Foundation's (ETF) Governance for Employability in the Mediterranean (GEMM) initiative, began implementing a decentralised tracer study model applicable to all TVET. In the same year, the Federation of Chambers of Commerce, with donor support, developed a survey to assess relevance of TVET graduates' competences on entering work.

Monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of TVET is done by each ministry that is accountable for that part of the system. However, an integrated TVET management information system is lacking.

In cooperation with the ETF, national indicators were developed in 2017, as well as a national monitoring and evaluation framework, through a collective effort with the participation of the TVET sector. The MoE, the MoHE and the private sector are collecting information based on the monitoring and evaluation framework but this information is not being centralised and therefore having a complete picture of the TVET system remains a challenge.

Quality assurance and the qualifications cycle

The Strategic Plan for Education (2017–2022) includes the need to develop and implement the national qualifications framework (NQF). The first draft of the NQF was developed with support from GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, a German development agency), and there is a common understanding to review and amend the draft as part of the TVET unification efforts announced by the government.

The MoL and MoHE have completed the pilot version reforms of their curricula, based on the complex tasks and learning situation methodology (competence-based curricula), aiming to harmonise qualifications and link them to the needs of the labour market by relying on the Palestinian Occupation Classification based on the Arab Standard Occupational Classification and workshops with sector representatives.

The system assumes permeability between different levels. Accordingly, different measures were adopted recently, including accepting VE graduates of all specialisations at universities (with the exception of medicine); previously, they were accepted only in relevant fields to their studies. Occupational standards and curricula of a number of professions within the different levels were also developed according to the adopted Arab Standard Occupational Classification.

Yet, vocational training is still in need of an accreditation and qualification system to link with the national education and training framework. Curriculum development for vocational training has been completed in accordance with occupational standards at the first and second NQF levels, and was approved and launched by the MoL at the beginning of the 2019/20 academic year. This was developed through a European Union project implemented by GIZ, and this is an important step on the road towards accreditation and quality assurance.

The MoE and the MoHE are responsible for verification of attainment of TVET qualification standards and certification of students. Vocational school students take the vocational general secondary examination. Technical college students take the comprehensive applied examination. VTC students take practical examinations.

Quality assurance and VET provision/provider institutions

The quality assurance system includes various measures.

- The Accreditation and Quality Assurance Committee accredits new technical colleges and programmes.
- Competency centre standards are benchmarked against ISO 9001:2015 and ISO 29990 standards and constitute a starting point for TVET quality.
- Personnel from the MoL, the MoE, the MoHE and the private sector have completed courses/examinations in quality management systems (ISO) and have been certified as a lead auditor of ISO 9001:2015.
- Procedures manuals for competency centres are a potential soft tool for application of quality principles in the centres' operations.
- A work-based learning methodology was developed in cooperation with Enabel in 2017/18.

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An overall quality assurance approach for TVET providers is lacking. VET needs a comprehensive system of accreditation, quality assurance, and accompanying systems that have been mentioned in the proposed strategy and the proposed law. Current mechanisms/procedures adopt a quality control approach, mainly referring to auditing/inspection of inputs with little autonomy for providers.

Systemic processes/procedures to assure the quality of TVET provision include MoE, MoHE and MoL standards for accreditation, learning environment, learning outcomes, teaching and curriculum in the TVET institutions they oversee; MoE and MoHE's curricula and textbooks for vocational schools; MoE and MoHE's quality control/audit of vocational schools and public community colleges; the Accreditation and Quality Assurance Committee's accreditation of new community colleges; and MoL's audits of VTCs.

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

Teachers and trainers in the TVET sector often hold university degrees relevant to the vocation they teach or train. Some hold a post-secondary diploma, while others hold vocational secondary certificates or vocational training centre certificates with accredited experience certificates or short training courses.

The MoE has prepared a draft professional standard for TVET teachers in vocational secondary schools, which illustrates the most important technical and cognitive skills and competences and attitudes for TVET professional teachers. It includes standard evaluation forms through which professional teachers are evaluated.

There are accredited classifications, namely:

■ in the MoE for professional teachers starting from beginner teacher and reaching expert teacher;
■ in the MoL for professional trainers, starting from a vocational trainer then the head of the vocational field then the deputy director for technical affairs;
■ in the MoHE for the lecturers of theoretical subjects who hold at least a master's-level degree and technicians who most often hold certificates of at least an intermediate diploma.

Mechanisms/requirements focused on assuring the quality of teacher/trainer in-career development include:

■ professional development of teachers and trainers;
■ orientation and training policy for those entering the education profession;
■ evaluation of vocational teachers and trainers in TVET institutions by school principals, centres' directors and deans of faculties using special forms approved by the ministries and the General Personnel Bureau. Assessment is based on criteria, years of seniority and grade. An evaluation of the vocational teacher/trainer is partially carried out by the trainees in VET institutions, but this is not systemic;
■ multi-stage procedures, including an interview with the Administrative Committee formed by the MoE, MoL, MoHE and Civil Service Bureau, when appointing new professional trainers or teachers in the public sector;
■ the policy of parallel contracts, which means equalising the salaries of temporary contract employees with those of full- or part-time employees;

- a continuous Training the Trainers policy according to current needs. Teachers in beneficiary institutions are targeted, with a large number of pedagogy, technical and management training activities. These activities include many donor-funded projects;
- certificates of appreciation and encouragement from the MoE and the MoL;
- a one-year probation period for teachers;
- TVET Teacher Education Strategy (2008);
- a career ladder, a key part of the Teacher Education Strategy, which motivates TVET teachers to pursue continuing professional development;
- the TVET Human Resources Development Unit for developing teacher competences;
- projects and activities associated with the adoption of more modern and efficient learning styles. A large number of TVET programmes are carried out based on new learning and teaching methodologies.

3. STRENGTHS, DEVELOPMENTS, NEEDS

New developments – in progress/in the pipeline

- For the near future, the new body or agency that will be responsible for the TVET sector (still to be decided) will develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system with relevant tools and standards.
- The law to cover the TVET sector is being revised.
- A donor-led initiative (mainly GIZ) for training of TVET teachers and trainers is ongoing
- The curricula for grades are currently being developed.
- Exposure to TVET in grades 7 to 10 started being implemented in 2017/18.
- The MoE and MoHE is considering providing access to TVET as one of its priorities.

Needs

To assure the quality of TVET, there is a need to:

- address the sustainability of quality assurance related activities undertaken with the support of international partners/donors and mainstream best practice;
- fully implement the quality assurance plans as stated in the National VET Strategy;
- develop quality assurance mechanisms related to teachers' qualifications and continuing professional development;
- increase the autonomy and accountability of TVET providers, including through pilots to incentivise directors to take greater responsibility and ensure coherence between effective external and internal provider evaluation;
- further develop the labour market information system and establish a coherent, integrated TVET management information system, including the development of a full set of indicators for monitoring the efficiency/reform of the TVET sector.

4. GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE: NATIONAL VET STRATEGY

The 2010 revised TVET Strategy places strong emphasis on quality assurance and quality management. The associated Action Plan refers to the establishment of a national accreditation and quality assurance body with responsibility for developing/applying a TVET quality system, promoting a quality culture, and developing curricula, assessment and certification.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ETF	European Training Foundation
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross domestic product
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
MoL	Ministry of Labour
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NQF	National qualifications framework
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency
VET	Vocational education and training
VTC	Vocational training centre

Where to find out more

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www.etf.europa.eu

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