

VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING



Country Factsheet 2021 Jordan



Contents

<u>Content and Stage of Development</u>	3
<u>Policy and Regulatory Framework</u>	3
RPL in VET sector	
Towards an overarching approach to PRL	
<u>Institutional Setup and Collaboration</u>	5
<u>Beneficiaries and Impact</u>	6
<u>Challenges and Opportunities</u>	7

Context and Stage of Development

In Jordan, the term used for validation of non-formal and informal learning is “recognition of prior learning” (RPL). RPL is currently limited to the vocational education and training (VET) sector. Individuals or employers can request an assessment, occupational classification, and the issuance of occupational practice licences within three basic occupational skill levels (semi-skilled, skilled and craftsman levels) in a wide range of occupational areas.

The service was introduced in 1999 within the frame of mandatory occupational licensing but the demand for services is limited by a lack of awareness among individuals and has gradually fallen due to declining enforcement of licensing requirements and weak buy-in from employers.

The system of occupational testing has been recently used as one of the measures to address the refugee crisis. With the support of international community, over 18,000 Jordanian and Syrian workers had their skills tested and received an occupational practice license.

The recently adopted Jordanian National Qualifications Framework (JNQF) provides for an overarching approach to validation across the whole qualification system but the necessary bylaws and guidelines are not yet in place.

Policy and Regulatory Framework

RPL in VET sector

In the VET sector, RPL has been applied since 1999 according to Law No 27 of 1999 (occupational work organisation law) and its secondary laws. Under this law, carrying out specific occupations/jobs in the labour market requires the possession of occupational practice licences indicating the workers’ occupational skill levels. The list of occupations subject to the procedure is identified by the cabinet. But individuals can also apply for RPL in other occupations to improve their chances for a better employment and to qualify for training courses facilitating professional development.

The occupational work organisation law No 11 of 2019 restricted the enforcement of the procedure to the workplaces in the Ministry of Labour.

The occupational work organisation law classified workers into five categories according to their occupational skill levels: semi-skilled (lowest level), skilled, craftsman, technician and specialist (highest level). However, the RPL assessment tests and the issuance of related practice licences are limited to the three basic levels: semi-skilled, skilled and craftsman.

Candidates are assessed against occupational standards which are also used to develop training programmes and assessment instruments in VET. The occupational standards are based on the Arab Standards Classification of Occupations (ASCO).

Towards an overarching approach to RPL

The Human Resources Development Strategy (HRDS '2016-2025') included a strategic objective regarding access to VET: "Establish progressive pathways to promote and recognise all forms of learning and skills development within the system and in the labour market and create new options for high quality tertiary TVET". One of the projects under this objective was to adopt the National Qualifications Framework, which provides for a new and overarching RPL system.

The Jordan National Qualifications Framework (JNQF) was adopted in 2019 through By-law No 9. It consists of 10 qualification levels from preschool certificate (KG2) (level 1) to PhD qualification (level 10). VET-related qualifications range from level 2 to level 5.

The reformed qualifications system, one implemented will allow people to obtain qualifications at all ten levels through RPL. According to the JNQF by law, RPL should enable individuals to continue their education and learning.

Within the 12 general policies developed and adopted for JNQF, the 5th policy is related to RPL. The policy indicates that education and training institutions and awarding bodies should facilitate RPL in order to have their qualifications placed on the JNQF. The qualifications awarded through RPL shall have an equal status to the ones awarded in the formal education system. But the bylaws, policies and guidelines necessary to implement RPL across the national qualifications system have not yet been developed.



Institutional Setup and Collaboration

According to the Law No 27 of 1999, the Vocational Training Corporation (VTC) was the governmental institution mandated to implement occupational assessment tests and to issue practice licences for workers, including those who have acquired their competencies and skills through non-formal and informal learning.

In 2012 the responsibility for conducting occupational assessment tests and issuing practice licences was transferred to the then established Centre of Accreditation and Quality Assurance (CAQA), according to Employment and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (ETVET) Council Law No 46 of 2008, and CAQA By Law No 35 of 2012. CAQA authorised the VTC to continue conducting assessment tests in the VET sector, as it is the main vocational training provider with the required technical equipment and human resources. The National Company for Employment and Training (NET) was also authorised to conduct RPL assessment tests for groups of Jordanian and Syrian workers targeted by the projects of international donors.

In 2019 CAQA was incorporated into the newly established Technical and Vocational Skills Development Commission (TVSDC) in accordance with Law No 9 of 2019 (Technical and vocational skills development law). The TVSDC continued cooperation in implementing assessment tests for individuals seeking RPL with the VTC. Occupational practice licences are currently issued by CAQA/TVSDC.

According to the instructions for conducting occupational tests and awarding practice licences, private sector involvement in RPL in VET is possible through participation in the supervisory committees composed of practitioners from both the public and private sectors to conduct assessment tests for individuals. Also, subject expert members from the private sector participate in technical committees set up for developing occupational assessment tests. In addition, private sector representative lead the Sector Skill Councils which are in charge of development of occupational standards.

The Accreditation and Quality Assurance Commission for Higher Education Institutions (AQACHEI) is the public institution mandated with the implementation of the JNQF. In addition, the Technical and Vocational Skills Development Commission (TVSDC) is partly involved in JNQF implementation through its role with regard to processing the applications for institutional and programme listing on the JNQF.

To implement the JNQF, the AQACHEI has formed a steering committee for general policies with members representing the key institutions concerned, as well as technical committees covering different aspects of JNQF implementation. In addition, the AQACHEI has established a JNQF directorate.

The 5th policy on JNQF calls for both AQACHEI and TVSDC “each according to its mandate” to work on ensuring development of RPL policies by all training and education providers and qualifications awarding institutions, assuring that information, guidance and advice as well as quality assurance mechanisms are included in the RPL policies, promoting the RPL and approving the award decisions made through RPL. However, AQACHEI and TVSDC have not started working on the implementation of this policy.



Beneficiaries and Impact

Individuals apply for RPL in VET in Jordan to get occupational practice licenses as nationally recognized evidence of their skills and competencies for practicing specific occupations. Individuals’ benefits as a result of RPL may include improving their opportunities for employment, promotion, and access to further training as well as migration for work. However, there are no documented studies or data on impact of RPL to beneficiaries.

RPL services in the VET sector are open to migrant workers, provided that they have valid work permits. The number of individuals (Jordanians and migrant workers) who undertook the RPL occupational assessment tests of the VTC, other than through donor-funded projects, and obtained occupational practice licences for the period 2010-2018 amounts to 38,205 (Jordanians: 34,095, migrants: 4,149). The annual numbers of issued licences declined almost every year during that period, from 5,600 in 2010 to around 3,200 in 2018.

Additionally, with the support of international organisations, several projects/initiatives are being implemented in Jordan with the aim of providing opportunities for Jordanian and Syrian workers who are already employed to obtain occupational practice licences at semi-skilled worker level. The international organisations have cooperated with the VTC, National Employment and Training (NET) and Jordan Construction Contractors Association (JCAA) training centre in implementing these initiatives. The total number of workers who obtained licences through projects supported by international organisations from 2017 to August 2021 was 18,200.

Challenges and Opportunities

Close coordination and cooperation between AQACHEI and TVSDC will be necessary to develop unified concepts, procedures, and measures for awarding qualifications in the RPL system under the JNQF.

Although RPL has been applied in the TVET sector for more than 2 decades in Jordan, it was limited to the 3 basic levels of the NVQ system. The RPL system to be developed according to the JNQF should cover all qualification levels in all education subsystems. Therefore, there is a need to extend and deepen the experiences to cover new involved institutions and sectors.

The recently established NQF directorate in AQACHEI is responsible for all aspects related to JNQF including RPL. Insufficient human resources are a potential barrier for fulfilling its responsibilities effectively. This also, but to a lesser extent, concerns TVSDC. To advance the RPL agenda, relevant units would have to be established with a mandate to deal with RPL matters in AQACHEI and TVSDC. Capacity building of staff involved in RPL will be necessary.

Sufficient public funding will have to be allocated for the development and implementation of RPL. International donors' projects can be used to facilitate the further the development of RPL including financial and technical support. The technical support could include staff capacity building, development of RPL database, assessment, and quality assurance procedures.

Individuals applying for RPL are required to pay fees for the assessment tests and the occupational practice licences. There are no exemptions or subsidies for disadvantaged groups such as the long term unemployed and people with disabilities for whom the fees might be a barrier. Except for projects supported by international donors, the fees paid usually do not cover all the costs of RPL assessment which have to be covered by the testing institution. Such funding model disincentivises the RPL providers from promoting the service.

RPL is not well known by stakeholders (employees, employers, students, trainees, parents, and training providers). This negatively affects the demand for RPL services. There is a need for awareness campaigns targeting different groups of potential beneficiaries. The public employment offices could provide guidance on RPL and refer the job seekers to the RPL service. This requires capacity building.

The low trust in the outcomes of RPL could be another potential barrier to the wide adoption of the RPL system. More interest and support will be needed to develop high quality RPL processes and methodologies, and to build capacities of RPL practitioners. There is a need to develop relevant job profiles such as RPL counsellor and RPL assessor, and relevant accredited training programmes.

Digital tools could be better used to support implementation and monitoring of RPL. The monitoring system should provide data for continuous improvement of RPL service.