

INVENTORY ON THE VALIDATION OF NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

Country Factsheet 2023: Tunisia

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Context and stage of development

Validation of learning outcomes gained from experience (either in a workplace or as a result of daily activities) is a key element for lifelong learning (LLL) and employability. It should take place according to a structured procedure which makes it possible to take into account different achievements, certify knowledge, skills and competences, and, if all conditions are met, obtain a qualification.

Despite early piloting activities carried out by the Ministry of Vocational Training and Employment (MFPE which in 2021 became MEFP) in 2005-2007, and despite a convincing system designed from 2015 thanks to the PEFESE programme¹, there is to date no national legislation or official definition² regarding validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL) or validation of experiential learning outcomes (Validation des acquis de l'expérience, VAE), which is the French term used in Tunisia.

The main national legislation relevant to VNFIL remains the Framework Law no. 2008-10 dated 11.02.2008 relating to the Vocational Education and Training (VET) (Loi n° 2008-10 du 11 février 2008 relative à la formation professionnelle) and its Article 61 (see next section)³. This is because the system that has been elaborated for VAE concerns only technical vocational education and training (TVET) Article 61, provides for the possibility of awarding all vocational qualifications through VNFIL, however, the decree describing the conditions for validation which was supposed to be issued by the MFPE/MEFP has not yet been published.

The Government is the main regulator and supplier of formal education and training. To date, VNFIL does not exist and is not planned in any other sector, whether secondary or tertiary education. The PEFESE has made it possible to lay the foundations for a high-quality VAE system in vocational education and training (with the most convincing step forward being the elaboration of qualification and training standards that are VAE friendly, in 2016). Tunisia then joined the IRADA⁴ and in parallel an ILO-supported RCV programme⁵ with the aim to actually implement VAE, and there were training/awareness-raising and capacity building sessions for all the actors and other key stakeholders of the system.

VNFIL is requested by social partners, mainly by the Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT) and the employers' union Tunisian Union of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (UTICA), and the sector's professional federations (Building, ITC, Mechanic). In the labour market there is the long existing legal framework available for some craft sectors (Trade Test System⁶) allowing workers with no qualification but with occupational experience of at least three years to be assessed and receive a "Certificate of labour market competences (Certificat d'attestation de qualification professionnelle, CAQP)". The system leading to the CAQP is national, the points in common with the VAE are that it allows recognition of skills acquired through professional experience, but the way of recognition and the outcome differ.

Despite having a very active civil society sector, Tunisia has not started yet to introduce VNFIL in it.

¹ Budget support programme for the education, training and higher education sectors for the employability of graduates (*Programme d'appui budgétaire aux secteurs de l'éducation, de la formation, de l'enseignement supérieur pour l'employabilité des diplômés*) The PEFESE program is a support program for education, vocational training and higher education, but each ministry has benefited from independent support. For the MFPE there were three types of supports: concerning the CNQ, information and orientation and continuing training. Support for VAE was part of support for CNQ and was accompanied by a second experiment relating to a holistic system: writing curricula based on learning outcomes and promoting lifelong learning. and explaining the choice of Tunisia to issue the same diploma for both learners and VAE candidates.

² There is a common understanding which is the validation of the acquired knowledge of working life (experience, training, leisure activities)

³ <https://www.anm.nat.tn/useruploads/files/gaztte0142008.pdf>

⁴ Regional initiative to support sustainable economic development (*Initiative régionale d'appui au développement économique durable*)

⁵ RCV: Making skills visible: improving career guidance, learning and skills recognition in Tunisia.

⁶ <http://www.emploi.gov.tn/fr/68/certificat-dattestation-de-qualification-professionnelle>.

Another main problem in Tunisia is the absence of linkage of VNFIL/VAE to the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) which was adopted in 2009 (*Classification Nationale des Qualifications (CNQ)*) because it is not yet operational. However, the design of VAE foresees the link with CNQ through the certification standards which are based on learning outcomes once they are included in CNQ.

Policy and Regulatory Framework

There is no national legislation regarding VNFIL/VAE. The main national legislation relevant to VNFIL remains the Framework Law no. 2008-10 dated 11.02.2008 relating to the Vocational Education and Training.

Article 61 of the 2008-10 Law states: “The qualifications mentioned in the above Articles 9 and 13, except for the vocational upper secondary education qualification (*Baccalauréat professionnelle*), can be awarded through Validation of Occupational Learning Outcomes, i.e., only learning outcomes acquired at the workplace. The validation conditions of the prior occupational learning outcomes are decided by decree of the Minister overseeing technical vocational education and training.”

Therefore, the Article 61 of the 2008-10 Law provides the possibility of awarding all vocational qualifications through VNFIL, i.e.:

- Secondary vocational education: Certificate of vocational aptitude (CAP, *Certificat d’aptitude professionnelle*).
- Secondary vocational education: Professional technician's certificate (BTP, *Brevet de technicien professionnelle*).
- Post-secondary vocational education: Higher technician's certificate (BTS, *Brevet de technicien supérieur*) or an equivalent qualification.

As mentioned in the last sentence of Article 61, the conditions for the validation were supposed to be set by a decree of the MFPE/MEFP. At the time of the drafting, this decree has not yet been published.

Nevertheless, VNFIL remains an apparent priority of Tunisia and the MEFP strategy focuses on VAE, among others: (i) social and political consensus; (ii) coherent and comprehensive regulatory framework; (iii) degrees designed with reference to VAE requirements; (iv) developed funding tools; (v) trained and involved actors; (vi) developed tools and instruments; (vii) adapted human and technical resources; (viii) "individualised" training offer allowing applicants to complete their route.

The Tunisia National Qualifications Framework (NQF) (*Classification Nationale des Qualifications, CNQ*) was established in 2009. It has seven levels and six descriptors. Yet, it is not operational in the sense that it is not known or used by economic operators (e.g. employers). It is somewhat difficult to find information regarding its structure and usage. There is no possibility to do systematic credit accumulation and transfer for learners. The concept of credit is missing in the NQF in the sense that qualifications are not based on credits. Nevertheless, the NQF is said to be based on learning outcomes, but it is not clear how. The National Qualifications Catalogue (or Repertory) is regularly mentioned but not operational.

Regarding the Trade Test System mentioned in the previous section, the main target groups are provided by the Decree No. 2005-3078 of November 29, 2005⁷, establishing the list of small trades and crafts activities, and determining the activities which require a CAQP for practicing.

⁷ Decree No. 2005-3078 of November 29, 2005, which establishes the list of activities in small trades and crafts and determines the activities that require professional qualifications in Tunisia. See: <http://www.emploi.gov.tn/sites/default/files/inline-files/3078fr.pdf>

Institutional setup and collaboration

Many public bodies are involved in the development of the VAE systems and potentially in its implementation:

- MEFP and regional directorates, for the governance level. Non-formal learning is not monitored by government departments. MEFP is leading the national policy of implementing all LLL mechanisms. The Directorate of Standards and Certification is responsible for the advocacy in favour of the national VAE system, approaches, and tools.
- Ministry of Tourism
- Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fishing
- Ministry of National Defence
- Tunisian Agency for Vocational Education and Training (ATFP), for non-formal learning, it offers monitoring and effective training which offers recognition for unqualified individuals by awarding a certificate of competence (classified as Diploma at level 1 of the NQF)
- National Centre for Training of Trainers and Training Engineering (CENAFFIF)
- National Centre for Continuing Education and Professional Promotion (CNFCPP) (and regional units)
- National Agency for Employment and Self-employment (ANETI) (and employment offices)
- Training Agency in Tourism Professions (AFMT), Agricultural Extension and Training Agency (AVFA), National Institute for Agricultural Education and Continuing Training (INPFCA), public stakeholders on the formal apprenticeship, and providers of non-formal trainings and qualifications.
- Regional Chambers of Private VET
- Tunisian Union of Industry, Trade and Handicrafts (UTICA), Tunisian General Labour Union (UGTT), Tunisian Hospitality Federation (FTH), and Tunisian Textile Clothing Federation (FTTH) (professionals' organisations), as social partners.

The roles of organisations and institutions are not clearly defined in regulations of VAE.

On the face of it, all actors and key stakeholders are legitimate. The RCV programme has proposed a coordination mechanism. But the lack of involvement at the political level is the issue.

Beneficiaries and impact

There are no users as such of the Tunisian VAE system. Even for the pilots that were carried out in the context of the PEFESE could not lead to the awarding of a qualification due to the lack of a legislative framework in place.

In 2016, three vocational fields were selected for the pilots, with one trade in each: mason for the building industry, waiter for the Hospitality and Tourism industry, and fisherman for the fishing industry.

Challenges and opportunities

At the time of the drafting, the central recommendation would be to promulgate the legal texts that have been prepared during the PEFESE and improved in the context of the RVC⁸ and IRADA projects. The VAE system has been elaborated, and the only missing element is the publication of the legislative framework elaborated since 2021 (by IRADA and RCV). The VAE needs high-level political commitment. At the technical level, the necessary work has been produced.

In greater detail, when it comes to VAE, Tunisia needs **more collaborative approach between institutions** to get to better results. This can be achieved by strengthening responsibilities for the VAE. The creation of an inter-ministerial delegation would be an option. Issues such as legislation, information and guidance, and funding should not be delayed. For example, there is a need for Tunisia to discuss the cost, price, and financing of the VAE; and to consult with international experts and engage in comparative research.

Possible recommendations are:

- All existing texts on VAE should be promulgated, and VAE should be implemented.
- LLL should move to a qualification-based system in the entire LLL system.
- There should be a communication strategy so that TVET qualifications are valued and have currency in the labour market.
- Qualifications achieved in the VAE system should carry the same weight in the society and have the same currency in the labour market as qualifications achieved in the formal education and training system.
- There should be a communication policy to inform the broad public about VAE.
- When it becomes a reality, the VAE system should rapidly be rolled out in the regions.
- A funding mechanism should be decided for VAE applicants not to bear most of the cost of VAE.
- Companies should be incentivised to invest in the VAE system (drafting qualification standards, assessing VAE applicants, hiring owners of VAE qualifications).
- Capacity building about VAE should be organised, with the preparation of a knowledgeable workforce.
- Capacity building of support units within professional federations should be organised.
- Training centres should be accredited in order to carry out validation and organise personalised training for the candidates.
- The national qualifications framework should be implemented, and microcredentials should be part of the national qualifications framework (CNQ)

These recommendations should be refined in collaboration with government officials and stakeholders to set priorities and operationalize them. The support of the ministry is a necessary element to relaunch the works.

⁸ RCV ; Make the Competences Visible (*Rendre les compétences visibles*)