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TORINO PROCESS: REVIEW OF POLICIES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING IN PALESTINE – 2025

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This report has been prepared by the European Training Foundation in collaboration with National Commission for Vocational and Technical Education and Training (NTC) Palestine.

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PREFACE

In 2022, the European Training Foundation (ETF) launched the sixth round of the Torino Process, a biennial review of vocational education and training (VET) in countries across East and Southeastern Europe, Central Asia, and the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean regions. The Torino Process (TRP) describes and analyses developments in the participating countries, identifies challenges in the domain of human capital development, and describes how countries mobilise their VET systems to address these challenges.[1]

This round had a twofold focus, looking at:

- The performance of education and training systems, particularly VET, in terms of creating good and equitable opportunities for lifelong learning (TRP Level 1); and
- The policies influencing the performance of education and training systems and their analyses to identify areas in which improvement is needed and formulate practical advice on transitioning to responsive lifelong learning systems (TRP Level 2).

This review focused on the second level of country participation (TRP Level 2), which enables an evaluation of the measures countries are taking to influence and enhance the performance of their policies and systems from a lifelong learning perspective. This involves documenting and interpreting the effectiveness of policies and systemic arrangements in countries, considering (a) the demand for learning opportunities, and (b) the relevant socioeconomic and demographic developments that may influence this demand.

The review process comprised four phases:

- Preparation, which involved a formal expression of interest by the country and joint identification of issues, priorities and stakeholders by the partner country and the ETF.
- Desk research, which involved a review of primary and secondary data and documentation produced by the country or other organisations, including the ETF.
- Field work, which involved site visits by the in-country expert to map key interlocutors and conduct interviews, focus groups and discussion groups.
- Report preparation, which involved report drafting, quality assurance, and validation and dissemination.

At the request of the Palestinian authorities, the review conducted in Palestine focused on lifelong learning with an emphasis on the technical and vocational education and training (TVET) system with respect to system management, access and quality. The expert team and the ETF discussed and agreed the structure of the report in March 2025. The Torino Process defines ‘lifelong learning’ as any learning activity undertaken throughout a person’s life with the aim of improving knowledge, skills/competences and/or qualifications for personal, social and/or professional reasons. It defines technical and vocational education and training (TVET) as education that is mainly designed to enable

[1] A full overview of the Torino Process framework can be found here: https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2024-09/Torino%20Process%202022-24%20Guidelines_EN%20updated.pdf.

participants to acquire the practical skills, know-how and understanding necessary for employment in a particular occupation, trade, or class of occupations or trades.

The report has been prepared by Rabeh Morrar and Will Bartlett, both experts for the ETF. The ETF team included Mihaylo Milovanovitch, Denise Loughran, Cristiana Burzio, Simone Faltz, Chiara Margagliano and Galyna Terzi. Fabio Nascimbeni acted as country liaison for Palestine and Hugues Moussy as Head of the Human Capital Development (HCD) Intelligence Unit. The ETF would like to thank all stakeholders in Palestine who engaged with the process and provided valuable input to help finalise the report. Particular thanks should go to Hamdallah Jaber, Ahmad M.A. Al Othman, Mohammad S.A. Abu Hatab, Imad Salem, Jehad Draidi, and the entire team at the National Commission for Vocational and Technical Education and Training (NTC).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overall, Palestine's TVET system shows pockets of resilience and potential, despite facing systemic constraints. On a positive note, a number of providers, especially long-standing NGOs and select colleges, demonstrate market-driven, adaptive practices. They update curricula, invest in workshops and labs (often with donor support), integrate work-based learning (WBL) that can lead to effective placements when well resourced, and build employer linkages that translate training into jobs. Quality has improved in some areas, and inclusive models continue to open doors for marginalised learners. However, these gains remain fragile. System-wide fragmentation, exacerbated by the proposed dissolution of the National Commission for Vocational and Technical Education and Training (NTC), has left the sector without a unified strategy, and with weak and uneven quality assurance (QA) in place. Programmes are often steered by trends rather than reliable labour market information system (LMIS). Relevance and scale are constrained by chronic trainer shortages, outdated curricula in modern fields, underutilised equipment and the private sector's view of WBL as a cost. Access is further limited by high transport costs, mobility barriers, security issues (which disproportionately impact women and people with disabilities (PwD)), and heavy donor dependence, which threatens sustainability. The ongoing conflict exacerbates existing weaknesses, damaging facilities, disrupting deliveries and reducing job opportunities. Without a coordinated national framework and sustained investment in data, quality and employer partnerships, isolated successes are unlikely to translate into system-wide progress.

The organisation of IVET and CVET

The Palestinian TVET system is fundamentally undermined by severe institutional fragmentation and a lack of unified governance. The issue is further exacerbated by the proposed dissolution of the National Commission for Vocational and Technical Education and Training (NTC), which has left a critical void in coordination. This fragmented landscape, comprising various ministries, the UNRWA and private entities, often operates without a cohesive vision and effective oversight. This results in the proliferation of unlicensed, substandard training centres that undermine well-established, higher-quality institutions. Furthermore, the private sector often perceives WBL as a financial burden rather than an investment, particularly amid economic challenges, thereby limiting crucial practical training opportunities. While isolated initiatives such as Smart College and the Lutheran World Federation demonstrate successful market-driven and adaptive models, these individual achievements are challenged by pervasive systemic incoherence, highlighting the urgent need for a unified regulatory and strategic framework to ensure the relevance and quality of TVET.

TVET system management

In the Torino Process, system performance is assessed using a System Performance Index (SPI), a composite score ranging from 0 to 100 for each monitoring target. Since 2023, the management of Palestine's TVET system has experienced a significant decline marked by a drop by 1.07 points in the Index. This deterioration is primarily due to severe institutional fragmentation and the absence of a unified, central coordinating authority. In addition, there are critical gaps in unified labour market data

and strategic planning, with different entities collecting data inconsistently, often relying on individual initiatives or perceived trends rather than comprehensive market analysis for programme development.

The TVET system also suffers from weak and inconsistent quality assurance mechanisms. Existing quality control efforts predominantly focus on inspections and inputs rather than fostering a culture of continuous improvement or tracking measurable outcomes. There is a lack of systematic tracking of graduate employability or employer satisfaction, and available data is often disorganised and not tracked in a systematic manner. The lack of comprehensive digital evaluation and certification systems further exacerbates the issue, hindering accountability and effective feedback loops. These challenges are compounded by a severe shortage of qualified trainers, particularly in modern technical fields. Public sector salaries are uncompetitive compared to those in the private sector, making it difficult to attract skilled professionals. Consequently, many trainers lack the necessary technical skills and practical experience, often learning on the job.

Practical training opportunities are severely limited by numerous factors, including the high cost of equipment and underutilisation of existing resources. Modern, specialised equipment for fields such as AI applications or electric vehicle maintenance is prohibitively expensive, leading to a heavy reliance on external donor assistance for procurement under related projects. Even when advanced equipment is available, it often remains underutilised due to a lack of qualified staff to operate and use it for teaching. Mobility and security barriers, exacerbated by the ongoing conflict, represent a major obstacle, leading to significantly increased transport costs that can be as much as four times higher, making regular attendance unpredictable and dangerous for students. These restrictions disproportionately affect female students whose families may discourage their participation due to safety and privacy concerns.

Ultimately, the long-term effectiveness and sustainability of Palestine's TVET system are undermined by deep-seated systemic issues. Heavy reliance on external donor funding for infrastructure, equipment and even operational costs jeopardises sustainability, particularly if funding priorities shift, as has been seen with resources being redirected to humanitarian aid. Many curricula have not been updated for years, resulting in a mismatch between training content and the rapidly evolving demands of the labour market. The private sector often sees hosting trainees as an additional financial burden rather than an investment, further restricting crucial WBL opportunities, particularly in economically struggling areas. This is by the ongoing societal stigma surrounding vocational education, particularly for girls, which causes TVET to be perceived as a less prestigious alternative compared to university degrees, even when academic prospects are limited. These challenges are profoundly exacerbated by the destructive impact of the ongoing conflict, which has led to widespread economic hardship, severe movement restrictions, physical damage to facilities and psychological instability. This further disrupts education delivery and access for students.

Challenges in access to TVET

Access to TVET in Palestine is facing significant and escalating challenges, as evidenced by a 3.4-point decline in the SPI for learning access since 2023. A primary barrier stems from severe financial constraints affecting both institutions and learners alike. Acquiring modern, specialised equipment for many technical programmes is prohibitively expensive**,** forcing institutions, including those run by

NGOs, universities and the Ministry of Labour, to rely heavily on international donor funding. This dependence raises serious concerns about long-term sustainability, as programmes risk becoming outdated or being suspended if external funding is shifted or discontinued. For students, the significant increase in transport costs due to closures, checkpoints and security measures can sometimes be as high as four times the original amount, making regular attendance unaffordable for many. Coupled with economic hardship and the collapse of household incomes, families often have to prioritise basic needs over educational costs, leading students to seek free or low-cost programmes or even drop out prematurely to find employment.

Territorial and mobility barriers greatly hinder access, especially for vulnerable groups. Road closures, military checkpoints and longer travel times can turn short commutes into hour-long journeys, making regular attendance unpredictable and dangerous. These restrictions disproportionately affect female students, whose families often have heightened safety and privacy concerns. This can lead to parents discouraging their participation, or to students withdrawing altogether. Students from remote or rural areas often struggle to reach urban centres, where most TVET institutions and potential employers are located. This often means that they can acquire only partial or outdated skills from inadequately equipped local facilities. For persons with disabilities, access is further compounded by the discontinuation of specialised transport services due to financial crises and the lack of accessible infrastructure in many TVET centres, which effectively limit their participation.

Finally, the persistent societal stigma surrounding vocational education, particularly for female students, continues to influence enrolment patterns, with TVET often being viewed as a less prestigious alternative to university degrees, even when academic prospects are limited. While some women are breaking into non-traditional fields, many are still steered towards traditionally female occupations, thereby limiting their choices. The private sector's reluctance to fully engage in WBL, often viewing it as an additional financial burden rather than an investment, further restricts practical training opportunities for students. Although digital learning offers some flexibility, it cannot fully substitute the workshops, laboratories and face-to-face interaction that are essential for acquiring hands-on vocational skills, leaving graduates with potential gaps in technical competence. These interwoven challenges collectively create an unequal learning landscape, undermining the TVET system's capacity to provide equitable and effective access to quality education.

Quality and relevance of TVET

While there has been a slight improvement in the quality and relevance of TVET in Palestine since 2023, with an increase of 1.7 SPI points, the situation remains precarious due to the ongoing conflict. Many institutions demonstrate a clear commitment to quality by taking proactive measures such as vetting processes for trainers internal to institutions, continuously updating the curriculum and investing in modern equipment. They put an emphasis on applied, practical skills through workshops and structured assessments, aligning programmes with labour market needs. WBL is often integrated as a mandatory component, supported by regular checks to ensure compliance with standards. When well-supported, it has proven effective in achieving high employment rates.

However, these gains are fragile against pervasive systemic challenges, particularly with regard to curriculum and trainer quality. Many curricula have not been updated for years, resulting in programmes that are irrelevant to the rapidly evolving demands of the labour market in areas such as

digital marketing or renewable energy. This stagnation results in graduates who excel in theory but lack practical skills, often requiring an additional three to six months of training after graduation to become job ready. The system is facing a severe shortage of qualified instructors in advanced and modern fields. This shortage is exacerbated by public sector salaries being less competitive than those in the private sector, which makes it difficult to attract and retain skilled professionals. Consequently, trainers often lack practical experience, with some learning on the job. One result is that valuable modern equipment, often acquired through donor funding, remains underutilised given the lack of skills by trainers to operate it.

The implementation and sustainability of crucial WBL opportunities are severely hampered by economic realities and the private sector's hesitant involvement. Businesses often perceive hosting trainees as a financial burden rather than an investment. This view is intensified by economic repercussions and conflict-related closures, which have led to a drastic reduction in available training opportunities. Although donor funding has been instrumental in setting up WBL initiatives, providing equipment, supporting curriculum development and offering students financial aid, including wage subsidies, this heavy reliance on external assistance poses a risk of unsustainability. Programmes can be halted or forced to operate with outdated resources if funding ceases or shifts, as has happened with resources being redirected to humanitarian aid.

Ultimately, the long-term quality and relevance of TVET are undermined by deep-seated systemic issues. The fragmented governance and the proposed dissolution of the NTC have created a critical void in central coordination, resulting in a lack of unified strategic vision and disjointed interventions. This is exacerbated by weak and inconsistent monitoring and evaluation systems, a lack of systematic tracking of graduate outcomes and non-functional digital evaluation and certification systems. These factors collectively limit accountability and feedback loops as an instrument for improvement. Furthermore, the absence of reliable, unified LMIS means that programmes are often developed based on individual initiative or trendy specialisations rather than evidence-based market demand.

Impact of the ongoing conflict in Palestine

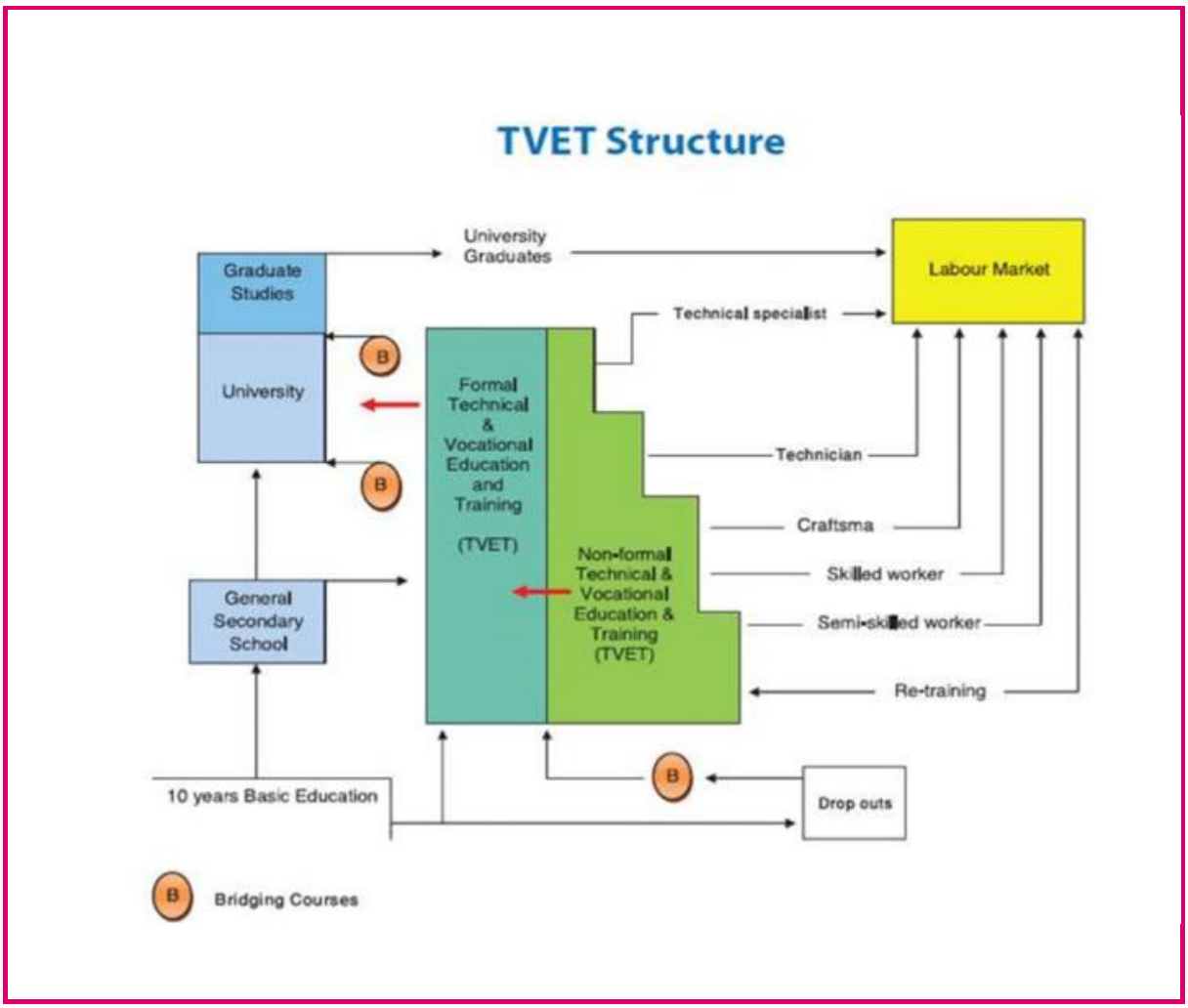
The ongoing Israeli assault on Gaza and the illegal occupation of the West Bank in Palestine has had a profound impact on socioeconomic well-being and access to TVET, leading to widespread destruction and severe disruption in all sectors. In the West Bank, escalations have resulted in business closures, sharply increased unemployment and greater financial burdens on families, making education and transport unaffordable for many students. Access to TVET is greatly hindered by barriers, checkpoints and road closures, while practical training and WBL opportunities are severely impacted as businesses operate at reduced capacity or have closed. The situation in Gaza is catastrophic, with 100 % of educational facilities damaged and hundreds of thousands of people left without access to learning. There has also been a loss of lives among TVET staff. The prospects for restoring TVET in Gaza are daunting and contingent on substantial external assistance. In both regions, the occupation exacerbates financial pressures, increases dropout rates and intensifies competition for drastically reduced job opportunities, undermining the functionality and future prospects of the entire TVET system.

1. BACKGROUND

The European Training Foundation launched the Torino Process for Palestine for 2022–2024 in collaboration with national authorities, experts and other partners. This report combines the monitoring of Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) policy and system performance with an in-depth review of policies and arrangements in all areas of lifelong learning (LLL). It sets out a detailed review of the policies and arrangements of importance for system performance from an LLL perspective, with lifelong learning being a priority for Palestine, along with the TVET system. The review specifically addresses policies and practices that influence TVET performance in terms of access, quality and system management, and considers the impact of the ongoing Israeli assault on Gaza on the operation of the TVET system in these areas. This is particularly important in view of the increasingly challenging economic and territorial situation in Palestine, despite the efforts already being made by the national institutions. The report sets out an assessment of how current arrangements support or hinder the development of an inclusive and effective TVET system.

1.1 The organisation of TVET

Palestine's TVET system offers both formal and non-formal pathways, enabling progression from general education to vocational and technical training. Learners can advance from basic education (ISCED 1–2) to secondary vocational schools (ISCED 3) or technical colleges (ISCED 4), or undertake retraining through non-formal programmes, which typically target semi-skilled or unemployed individuals. Bridging courses support mobility between educational pathways and progression towards higher education (ISCED 5 and above) (see Figure 1).



Source: MOEHE & MOL (2010), TVET Strategy

Initial vocational education and training

Initial vocational education and training (IVET) is managed by the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE) and targets young people at both public and private education institutions (ETF, 2024a). Students who have completed grade ten, i.e. those aged 16 years, can access more than 30 IVET programmes available from 21 vocational schools and 57 vocational units[2] (ETF, 2024a: 10). These two-year programmes are offered in three tracks: general vocational, competency-based and apprenticeships.[3] After passing the high school exam (Tawjihi), which is taken at the end of secondary school, students can continue their studies at a university or at vocational or technical

[2] A vocational unit is a training workshop or a set of workshops established within a school to meet the labour market needs of the targeted areas. Together, the vocational units provide training across 268 vocational training workshops, of which 22 training events are delivered directly by experts from the labour market.

[3] The vocational secondary schools offer all or some of the accredited vocational streams, which include an Industrial stream, an Agricultural stream, a Home economics stream and a Hospitality stream.

college.[4] As of 2021, there were 41 such colleges in Palestine (West Bank and Gaza) (ETF, 2021: 5–7). Three universities also offer dual-study programmes combining academic learning with practical, on-the-job learning. However, it should be noted that all universities provide some form of practical training as a graduation requirement, albeit not as part of a dedicated dual education programme.

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) also runs 11 Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) in the West Bank[5], offering 37 programmes for people aged 15 years and over.[6] These focus on fields related to practical vocational skills in the industrial sector and manual crafts, whereas those affiliated with the MoEHE focus on both vocational, technical, academic and life skills. Private training centres licensed by the MoL also offer training in various fields, including business.

The MoSD offers training to disadvantaged groups, such as juveniles, school dropouts and people with disabilities, through its two vocational centres in Nablus and Hebron (Beit Ummar) (ETF, 2021: 8). The UNRWA provides vocational programmes for refugee children at both secondary and post-secondary levels. NGOs also run IVET programmes, which can last from a few months to two years, depending on the course (ETF, 2021: 8).

Many IVET programmes are highly practical, with some dedicating up to '80 % of their time to hands-on training'. These programmes aim to produce 'graduates who are qualified to enter the job market from day one.' This includes real-world production experience, which allows students to learn through practical application, including by learning from their mistakes.

Continuous vocational education and training

Continuous vocational education and training (CVET) is aimed at adults who have completed their basic education or are already working. CVET institutions range from higher education institutions' continuous learning departments (MoL, 2020: 42) to TVET units run by the Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (FPCCIA) and the Palestinian Federation of Industries (PFI), as well as other government, NGO or private-sector CVET training providers. Some companies also provide on-site CVET programmes for their employees (ETF, 2024a: 18), which are limited to the current or prospective employees of the respective companies. In addition, CVET institutions run by private organisations and NGOs, which are often licensed by the Ministry of Labour (MoL), offer short-term and upskilling courses for adults and workers. These flexible programmes, lasting from a few months to two years, support skill development, LLL and career advancement.

CVET provides valuable training in modern fields such as electric cars and computer numerical control (CNC) machines to current employees. Curricula are increasingly integrating life skills, career guidance and soft skills considered essential for employability. Specialised centres conduct individual assessments of learners with disabilities to customise training and support. When supported, WBL

[4] It should be noted that progression to higher education is permitted only through two pathways: the general vocational track and the competency-based track. The latter, however, requires students to continue their studies at a technical college that corresponds to their specialisation in vocational school. The third pathway, apprenticeship-based vocational training, is designed to prepare skilled technicians and does not grant direct access to higher education unless graduates return after one year through private study.

[5] https://www.mol.pna.ps/MolBranches/VocationalTrainingCentres.html

[6] Unpublished data from the MoL for the year 2024-2025.

initiatives have demonstrated high employment rates, reaching '*70 % after trainees have completed the programme'*, owing to significant private sector involvement. Institutions also collaborate with the private sector through expert workshops for curriculum development and feedback.

Box 1. MoL led Innovation in CVET: Electric Car Training

The MoL's Vocational Training Centre in Jenin has emerged as a regional hub for electric car maintenance and technology training, in response to a rapidly growing demand in the labour market. The programme has proven highly successful, with 26 students currently enrolled (out of an initial 30), reflecting the relevance and popularity of this specialisation.

This initiative is particularly noteworthy due to its regional impact: students from neighbouring governorates such as Nablus and Tubas travel to Jenin to attend training, as equivalent programmes are not yet available locally. This has established the centre in Jenin as a leading provider of advanced technical skills in the northern West Bank.

The programme also demonstrates adaptive management practices. In response to the financial challenges faced by many students, the centre introduced a flexible attendance structure, splitting trainees into two groups and alternating between two and three training days each week. This approach ensures continuity of learning while accommodating students' economic constraints. Trainers maintain close contact with students during their training, holding regular weekly or fortnightly meetings to foster a strong link between classroom learning and workplace practice.

This success story highlights the importance of demand-driven training, institutional flexibility, and regional accessibility in strengthening Palestine's TVET system.

There has been a notable increase in the acceptance of, and demand for, long-term vocational training programmes (Level 2), particularly since October 2023. This surge is linked to a heightened awareness of the need for skilled workers, particularly following job losses in the Israeli labour market. Many now view professional training as a means of *'overcoming economic difficulties*.' Some vocational centres have seen enrolment increase by as much as 30 % during the war. Even individuals with master's degrees are enrolling in vocational training programmes, indicating a shift in perception.

The private sector plays a multifaceted yet limited role in CVET and in the provision of short courses in Palestine, serving as a primary provider of opportunities for practical training and a key source of information on labour market needs. These partnerships are essential for ensuring that educational programmes remain relevant and up to date in response to ever-changing job market demand. This directly contributes to the employability of graduates and bolsters self-employment. Although this relationship has witnessed notable progress in recent years, with greater private sector involvement in curriculum updates and the establishment of training agreements, it is still overwhelmed by multifaceted and persistent challenges. There is a consensus among stakeholders indicates that the CVET system in Palestine is seriously disconnected from the labour market due to the ongoing conflict, the economic downturn, a weak institutional framework and limited private sector involvement.

The economic repercussions of Israeli occupation restrictions on the West Bank, especially since October 2023, mean that many private sector entities now view hosting trainees as a financial burden rather than an investment. This has led to a drastic reduction in training opportunities, particularly in conflict affected areas such as the northern West Bank. Businesses are operating at reduced capacity

or have closed, which impacts work-based learning opportunities and means that students have to travel further or rely on their own efforts to secure placements.

Many private training centres hold licences from the Ministry of Labour, yet others operate without them, creating an environment of unregulated competition. This competitive environment raises concerns about inconsistent standards and weak quality assurance, as some centres provide low-cost courses that are poorly resourced and lack qualified trainers. As a result, many trainees often graduate adequate practical experience, since much of their hands-on training takes place in centres that lack the tools and facilities available in MoL training centres or those established by NGOs and universities. This situation also puts considerable pressure on the private sector to accommodate trainees and compensate for these institutional shortcomings.

Box 2. Smart College – a model for market-driven training and youth employment

Smart College has emerged as a leading vocational institution in Palestine, demonstrating how a market-driven and socially responsive approach can drive meaningful change in the employability of young people. By aligning its academic programmes with real-time labour market needs, the college ensures that students gain true professional competence, as well as certification. Programmes are regularly updated based on quarterly market surveys and consultations with private-sector stakeholders, resulting in the introduction of new specialisations such as men's grooming, energy services and construction trades.

With state-of-the-art facilities and a strong focus on practical training, Smart College ensures that all students graduate with the necessary skills. Students who do not meet the required standard are offered the opportunity to repeat the semester free of charge. The college also excels in linking students with job opportunities through strategic field training placements. Many students transition directly from training to employment or even self-employment, which reinforces the practical value of their education.

Instructors undergo continuous professional development, including advanced training abroad, to ensure that the curriculum remains relevant and of a high standard. The institution also plays a vital social role by offering substantial scholarships, covering up to 100 % of fees in some cases, to students from disadvantaged economic backgrounds, including children of security workers. This inclusive approach not only reduces unemployment but also protects at-risk youth from social marginalisation.

Through its strong partnerships with ministries and the private sector, Smart College exemplifies how innovative vocational education can provide a pathway to decent work and social stability.

Organisation of short-term courses

Short-term courses are an integral part of the CVET system and are usually categorised as Level 1 semi- or limited skilled worker programmes. These are designed to impart basic or limited skills necessary for immediate entry into the labour market and usually span 100–250 hours. They are intended for a variety of groups, including unemployed young people, working professionals looking to upgrade their skills, school dropouts and vulnerable populations, such as women. There are usually no age restrictions. Although these courses are practical and intended for working learners, they are sometimes perceived as being less prestigious than full diploma programmes.

Short-term courses are primarily offered by private training centres and continuing education centres, established at universities. To a lesser extent, they are also available from VTCs under the jurisdiction of the MoL, as well as NGOs, often through donor-funded projects. Short-term courses are diverse

and cover a wide range of areas, including life skills, business and management, handicrafts, and various vocational and technical fields. This diversity enables them to address the needs of various target groups, ranging from job seekers looking to acquire new skills to professionals seeking to upgrade their qualifications or change their career.

Box 3. Continuous education centre at An-Najah National University – innovation in short courses and lifelong learning

The Continuous Education Centre at An-Najah National University has evolved into a pioneering hub for short courses and professional training in Palestine, demonstrating resilience, innovation and a strong ability to respond to market needs. Initially established as a centre for continuous education, it later merged with the An-Najah Innovation Park. The centre has grown to become one of the most comprehensive providers of short courses in Palestine. More than 130 courses across 26 categories are available on its platform, with around 20 new courses in preparation. Its offerings cover traditional and emerging fields, including digital marketing, languages and nursing programmes, as well as modern specialisations such as artificial intelligence (AI), data analysis with Power BI, medical management, maintenance of medical equipment, cybersecurity and mini-MBA programmes tailored to different sectors, including in pharmacy.

The delivery of training is highly flexible and incorporates face-to-face learning, Zoom sessions, recorded sessions and hybrid models. A hallmark of innovation is the launch of the 'najah.ai' platform, an AI-supported system that matches individuals' skills with training opportunities. The platform was further developed during the war. Not only did it enable learning to continue during crises, but it also created new employment opportunities for graduates, who were recruited as programmers to enhance its functions. Curricula are based on labour market needs, employer requests and student demand. Content is reviewed by specialist faculty members and the AI unit to ensure academic rigour and practical relevance. Trainers are carefully selected and required to have special coaching certifications and proven field expertise, ensuring that courses emphasise practical application over theoretical knowledge. The centre employs continuous monitoring mechanisms, including student evaluations, mid-course follow-ups and performance reviews with trainers. Certificates are only granted upon completion of projects or assignments and upon achieving a minimum 70 % attendance, underscoring its commitment to quality outcomes.

Despite losing over 50% of planned courses during the war, the centre quickly adapted by shifting to online and hybrid formats, turning crisis into an opportunity for digital innovation. Its reputation has expanded internationally, attracting participants from the United States, Germany, Switzerland, Jordan, and the wider Arab region, while forging partnerships with private sector for customised training.

Despite these strengths, organising short-term courses faces persistent challenges, resulting in programmes that are uncoordinated and inconsistent in terms of quality. Notable disparities in skill levels, material resources, technical capacity and infrastructure exist among private training institutions, resulting in uneven quality and delivery standards — particularly in the absence of effective oversight on training content and delivery. University-based continuing education centres also face limitations, as they rely heavily on faculty members to deliver short courses. However, most of them are academics with limited training skills and practical market experience. Consequently, students often enrol in these courses primarily to enhance their CVs, regardless of the quality or depth of the skills acquired. Furthermore, the practical training during these short courses takes place mainly at training centres rather than WBL at private sector enterprises, which restricts opportunities to acquire real-world competencies, especially given the limited equipment and resources available in the centres offering these courses. Oversight is also fragmented, with multiple authorities involved, notably the MoL, which supervises private training centres, and the MoEHE, which oversees university continuing education units, both of which offer short training programmes.

There is often a mismatch between training quality and employer expectations. Some short-term courses *'do not allocate sufficient time for practical immersion*,*'* meaning that graduates are not fully prepared for the labour market. Employers often seek workers who have *'practised consistently over a*

longer term.' Additionally, there is no national framework for evaluating the *'quality or consistency of the practical component*,*'* resulting in uneven practical experience and difficulties with certificate recognition by employers. *'Some centres are perceived as offering mostly theory despite claiming practical training, due to a lack of oversight.'* Students may also drop out if the course content or job prospects do not align with their expectations. Additionally, some employers are reluctant to invest in training due to an unclear return on investment and a lack of incentives.

Even when institutions recognise the urgency of reform and design new curricula, lengthy accreditation processes delay implementation, causing further misalignment with dynamic market needs. In practice, this creates the perception that many short-term training programmes offer little more than certificates, rather than credible pathways to employment. This has fuelled *'big competition'* among providers, with some designing courses based on popularity or the availability of donor funding rather than real market demand. This further undermines the relevance and impact of training.

However, CVET institutions demonstrate a strong ability to adapt the short-term course they off in response to local market demands and evolving trends**.** New courses such as hybrid vehicle maintenance, digitalisation and medical training have been introduced to meet emerging needs. Providers emphasise a market driven approach, constantly revising their offers based on local trends. One training provider explained: *'We look at market requirements, talk to employers and listen to what is needed to create short training programmes for different ages*.'

Short course partnerships take many forms, particularly those between MoL training centres, industrial unions and chambers of commerce. These collaborations have expanded significantly during the war, with chambers of commerce increasingly providing skilled trainers from the private sector to support programme delivery. Equally important are the partnerships forged between MoL training centres, donor organisations and chambers of commerce. These partnerships have produced notable results in terms of the number of beneficiaries, the quality of skills delivered and high employment rates, especially in home-based projects led by women. Financial support, including covering tuition fees and transport costs, has played a vital role in increasing participation, particularly among trainees from rural areas. Furthermore, partnerships with chambers of commerce ensure that training programmes remain responsive to the actual skills required by employers and local markets.

1.2 Challenges

The Palestinian TVET system has made some progress in enabling learners to transition between different vocational education pathways. Students can often switch between TVET programmes or transfer to general education. In this respect, Palestine outperforms many other countries participating in the Torino Process (ETF, 2024c: 17). Progress has also been made in recognising and accrediting non-formal and informal learning. The government has taken steps to improve efficiency by setting up multipurpose institutions and offering training at more flexible times to increase adult participation (ETF, 2024c: 10). Work has also begun on the NQF, which could further clarify learning pathways and improve transparency.

However, serious barriers remain, especially in moving from vocational to higher education. Access to either technical or general higher education still requires passing the national high school exam (Tawjihi), which poses a major challenge for TVET graduates. This is particularly problematic for those

completing CVET programmes, who usually have to sit the exam independently in order to continue their studies (ETF, 2024a: 11).

The absence of standardised qualification frameworks and consistent recognition mechanisms further exacerbates the problem. There is no unified national system in place to determine graduates' skill levels or formally document the skills they have acquired at different institutions. This makes it difficult to transfer credits, recognise prior learning or certify progression from one level to another in a standardised way. Licensing processes, which are often focused on basic physical standards rather than the quality of training or outcome-based supervision, do not facilitate the establishment of clear competency benchmarks for progression.

Despite the numerous challenges posed by fragmented governance, the diversity of providers and institutional entry points has inadvertently enabled a relatively easier access for students to TVET programmes, particularly after the tenth grade. For some students who are not academically inclined or prefer a quicker entry into the job market, these programmes offer a viable alternative. However, the overall effectiveness of VET programmes is hindered by overarching systemic issues.

1.3 Methodology

Since 2023, the Torino Process analytical framework has been structured around two complementary strands. The monitoring strand assesses how effectively VET and adult learning systems deliver on key commitments to learners and stakeholders in support of lifelong learning. The assessment uses the System Performance Index (SPI), a composite measure on a scale from 0 to 100 applied to each monitoring target. The review strand examines policies and institutional arrangements that shape system performance, analysing their influence on the monitored areas. This report details the results of the review strand which, together with the monitoring strand, provides an evidence base for understanding outcomes and the policy drivers behind them.

Field research for the review strand adopted a mixed qualitative methodology designed to validate, triangulate, and build upon the desk-based assessment of Palestine's TVET system. The approach combined direct observation, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions across institutions representing four ISCED levels to ensure that data collection was context-sensitive and participatory, and that it reflected both institutional and learner realities. A purposive sampling framework was applied to capture territorial diversity and systemic disparities. Institutions were selected from the north, middle and south of the West Bank, with the participants including institutional leaders, academic and training staff, career guidance personnel, students, recent graduates and, where possible, private sector partners.

Multiple data collection tools were used. Semi-structured interview guides, which were tailored to each stakeholder group, explored themes such as access, relevance, quality, retention and labour market linkages. Focus group discussions with students captured their perceptions of learning conditions and barriers to completion. A direct observation checklist was used to assess infrastructure, gender-sensitive facilities and workshop availability. This was complemented by a review of institutional documents, including enrolment statistics, tracer studies and internship agreements. Engagement followed a two-phase modality: one-day on-site institutional visits per location with structured agendas

and guided tours to foster trust and gather first-hand insights, followed by virtual follow-ups to clarify gaps, validate findings and ensure completeness.

Data analysis employed a thematic content analysis framework, clustering findings under five dimensions: access and equity, quality and relevance, labour market linkages, retention and completion and institutional capacity. Ethical considerations guided the process, ensuring informed consent, confidentiality, and political sensitivity throughout.

The paper is structured around five interrelated themes that together capture the multifaceted realities of the Palestinian IVET and CVET systems. While encompassing both initial and continuous vocational education and training, the review places a particular emphasis on CVET and short-term courses, reflecting the priority of lifelong learning in the country and the dynamic nature of these offerings within the TVET sector. The *first theme* is an examination of structure and governance that maps system design. The *second theme*, System Management and Policy Coherence, examines the institutional and legislative frameworks, the allocation of responsibilities among ministries and stakeholders, and coordination mechanisms. It also explores the policy framework focusing on strategic planning, and the extent to which policies are aligned and implemented effectively. The *third theme* addresses barriers to access, focusing on socio-economic, geographical and gender-related constraints that shape participation in vocational training. The *fourth theme* evaluates the quality and relevance of training, including curriculum design, instructional practices, labour market alignment and the role of trainers. *Finally,* the paper analyses the impact of the ongoing conflict, highlighting how political instability, movement restrictions and resource limitations exacerbate systemic challenges and influence the delivery of, and outcomes in, vocational education.

2. TVET SYSTEM MANAGEMENT

According to ETF's 2024 System Monitoring Report, the quality of system management in Palestine has dropped substantially (by 1.07 SPI points) since the previous monitoring round in 2023 (ETF, 2024c). This section addresses this situation, paying particular attention to the institutional and policy frameworks, as well as the quality assurance mechanisms in place.

2.1 Institutional framework

The TVET landscape is populated by numerous stakeholders, including government ministries, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), academic institutions and private organisations. These entities often operate independently, resulting in a fragmented governance structure that leads to duplicated responsibilities and policy inconsistencies. The MoEHE and the MoL are the main bodies responsible for the provision of technical vocational education and training and the regulation of TVET institutions. They also oversee accreditation. Training programmes are also available from other bodies, such as the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), UNRWA, civil society organisations, and private companies such as the Jerusalem District Electricity Company and PALTEL (ETF, 2021: 4-6).

To improve coordination among these groups, the Higher Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (HCTVET) was established in 2005 as a political and strategic body (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2012). Consisting of 16 representatives from the public and private sectors (Hashweh, 2022), its purpose was to align TVET policies with labour market needs and improve the relevance and quality of training programmes, while preventing a situation where different ministries and stakeholders operate in silos.

In 2014, the Palestinian Cabinet approved the establishment of the National Technical Committee (NTC) to address the severe fragmentation in the TVET system and coordinate the efforts of various stakeholders in the sector. The NTC's main purpose was to align vocational education policies with labour market needs, enhance the quality and relevance of TVET programmes, and prevent ministries and institutions from operating in isolation.

However, the commission was suspended in the same month due to disagreements among different government stakeholders over its structure, as well as concerns about its mandate overlapping with those of existing bodies (Kuhail, 2015: 17). This delay has hindered efforts to centralise governance, resulting in continued fragmentation and a lack of coordination within the sector. Consequently, the fragmentation has persisted at the national level of the TVET governance system, resulting in significant inconsistencies in policy implementation between the West Bank and Gaza. The Commission was formally reinstated on 13 January 2020 through a Cabinet decision that outlined its legal and operational framework (Cabinet, 2020). In 2021, the NTC assumed responsibility for policy development and planning across the TVET sector, replacing the HCTVET, which was disbanded. Although the NTC was established to act as a 'national umbrella' and steer coordination efforts, it was unable to carry out its mandate effectively, highlighting the persistent lack of unified governance and conflicting roles among the different stakeholders, including the MoL, MoEHE, MoSD, UNRWA, NGOs, VTCs, private CVET centres and other actors.

Although the dissolution of the National TVET Commission was *proposed* by a decision of the Cabinet of Ministers adopted in April 2025, the NTC remains in place from a legal and administrative standpoint. However, it no longer has any staff with expertise in VET matters, meaning that it lacks the technical and institutional capacity to play a meaningful role. Consequently, the NTC has become functionally inactive, creating a critical governance void, with no single institution or ministry currently guiding the TVET sector. This has further exacerbated fragmentation and weak coordination across the system.

Reviews indicate that, despite its ambitious goals, the NTC has been unable to carry out its mandate effectively or fulfil its intended role of unifying national efforts. A lack of unified governance, coupled with continued role overlap among key stakeholders such as the MoL, MoEHE and MoSD, as well as NGOs and other institutions, has resulted in ongoing institutional fragmentation and weak strategic coordination.

The findings set out in the review show that although the NTC is still legally in place following its proposed dissolution in April 2025, it is functionally inactive and is widely perceived as a step backwards, which triggered a collapse in governance and cross-sectoral coordination. All stakeholders without exception agree that this has resulted in a significant decline in system performance. Previously advanced reforms, such as the national strategy, the qualifications framework and work-based learning initiatives, have either stalled or regressed. The NTC was intended to coordinate the TVET system as a 'national umbrella,' but its current inactive status has left a void. This means that development partners and donors must engage in bilateral coordination with ministries and other stakeholders, which hinders the sustainability of the different interventions. As one expert said: *'The overall TVET system will be affected by this lack of a central authority, which creates a general feeling that no institution, no ministry, nothing is in charge. They say they have a strategic plan. I don't know, it seems that we do not have a plan for the future.'*

This institutional vacuum has resulted in a lack of a coherent vision and strategic planning for TVET across Palestine. Without a central body, interventions are *'fragmented — not comprehensive, not holistic,'* which undermines their long-term sustainability and impact. There is a perceived *'lack of sincere political will'* to establish a cohesive system, resulting in a *'noticeable disconnect'* between the different actors in the TVET sector and a lack of *'reliable, comprehensive information on which to base our decisions. Each actor works separately.'* The consequences of this fragmented institutional framework are duplication and inconsistencies in the provision of TVET. Overlapping areas of responsibility among different ministries and organisations can lead to redundancy and incoherent policy implementation. For example, institutions may rely on both the MoEHE and the MoL for different course accreditations. This leads to confusion and inefficiencies within the system. Ministries often have limited capacity and resources, and lack a comprehensive vision, meaning that they are unable to effectively engage with stakeholders or ensure consistent coordination. For example, the Ministry of Education has been criticised for not having enough specialist supervisors for vocational subjects.

Despite this some elements of coordination remain in place. The MoL has set up local councils on employment and TVET (LET) throughout the West Bank, with the aim of fostering collaboration at the local level and raising awareness of the importance of TVET. Each LET includes representatives of the MoL, MoEHE and the Ministry of National Economy (MoNE) (Samara, 2023: 20–23). To improve coordination between the ministries, a committee of directors general (TVET leaders from both

ministries) was set up to help oversee the system. In parallel, a TVET Development Centre was also created to provide technical support (Kuhail, 2015: 14–16).

In addition, to improve collaboration with partners such as donors, development organisations, businesses and training centres, the government has established a Sector Working Group (SWG) and has plans to set up National Sector Skills Councils (NSSCs). The aim of these councils is to align education and training with labour market needs by promoting demand-driven skills development, work-based learning (WBL) and lifelong learning (LLL) (ETF, 2025: 8). While coordination mechanisms are in place, the NTC until its proposed dissolution and inactive status continues to address remaining gaps through efforts such as establishing. While coordination mechanisms are in place, the NTC — until its proposed dissolution and subsequent inactive status — continues to address remaining gaps through efforts such as establishing coordination committees and refining administrative structures (ETF, 2024b: 4, 14). However, the NTC's proposed dissolution (Aliqtisadi, 3 April 2025), which is intended to streamline government expenditure, has further weakened the coherence of the institutional landscape for TVET and reflects broader institutional fragmentation in the TVET sector.

Thus, over the last two decades, considerable efforts have been made to improve the management of TVET in Palestine. Various strategies have been implemented to strengthen and improve the effectiveness of the system, enhance management, approve policies, set priorities and secure funding (MoEHE, 2017: 87). However, the political division between the West Bank and Gaza, coupled with institutional fragmentation and the suspension of the activities of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) in the West Bank since 2007, has led to the paralysis of many coordination bodies in Palestine, including the HCTVET (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2012). Despite the dedicated efforts of the Palestinian Government to establish and organise an institutional and policy framework, the TVET system remains fragmented, which limits its coherence and effectiveness in delivering unified, comprehensive pathways for learners and employers.

Although the establishment of multiple coordination bodies may appear to be a proactive approach to governance, the proliferation of supervisory and coordinating entities has, in fact, led to overlaps in responsibilities and coordination challenges among them. The proposed dissolution of the NTC in April 2025 has itself contributed to this fragmentation and more general dispersion within the TVET system in Palestine. For example, without a strong central body, donors often default to bilateral coordination with ministries, prioritising their own objectives and compromising intervention sustainability and holistic development of the TVET system.

Overall, the fragmentation of institutional responsibilities within Palestine's TVET system has created deep structural challenges that undermine its cohesion, responsiveness and long-term sustainability. According to one interviewee, *'different ministries and organisations oversee overlapping areas, causing redundancy and a lack of coherence in policy implementation.'* These fragmented governance and institutional structures impact the quality and relevance of TVET programmes, posing significant challenges to their development and effectiveness. The absence of a central planning body has fuelled uncontrolled competition between providers, sometimes enabling poorly equipped, small centres to operate alongside large, well-established institutions, which has diluted quality and standards. Another consequence of this governance gap is poor alignment with labour market needs. Emerging fields, such as artificial intelligence, hybrid vehicle maintenance and green technologies, are

particularly difficult to integrate without a national roadmap or consistent funding for modern equipment and upskilling of trainers. In the absence of unified standards, the quality of programmes varies widely. There is an acute shortage of trainers, especially in modern technical fields. Low government salaries make it difficult to attract practitioners from the private sector, resulting in trainers who lack the necessary technical skills and practical experience and who are sometimes learning on the job. This also undermines the long-term sustainability of the TVET system, discourages collaboration and reduces donor confidence, making it difficult for the system to respond effectively to changes in the labour market. Consequently, national strategies are frequently only partially implemented, resulting in a persistent gap between policy planning and practice. Inconsistent outcomes are further reduced by weak monitoring and evaluation systems where data is not organised within a unified institutional system.

Fragmentation also affects career guidance. Inadequate guidance systems mean students often lack awareness of both their professional aptitudes and the opportunities available in the labour market.

Monitoring and evaluation system

The responsibilities for the collection of data used for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in TVET are divided between the MoL (private, public and NGO TVET centres), the MoEHE (industrial schools and technical colleges), the Ministry of Social Development (TVET centres for persons with disabilities, 'PwD'), the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) and the UNRWA (TVET centres for refugees). However, these responsibilities are not aligned into a single database, with each ministry pursuing its own vision. This has resulted in uncoordinated initiatives and the absence of a cohesive, long-term strategy for the sector. The information collected is often incomplete lacks sufficient detail to enable evidence-based decision-making. This limits its usefulness for designing demand-driven programmes or long-term policy planning and leads to inconsistencies across data sources, making it difficult to develop a reliable picture of the demand for skills on the labour market. TVET policymaking suffers from a lack of reliable data on the number of beneficiaries in relation to labour market demand and information about quality, as well as the unavailability of a reliable and unified labour market information system (LMIS) for skills forecasting. This data gap constrains the development of evidence-based policies and monitoring mechanisms. *'Different entities collect data inconsistently, making it difficult to gain a comprehensive picture of market needs and inform policy decisions*,*'* which often leads to programmes being developed based on individual initiatives or perceived *trends* rather than accurate market demand. *'The existing data from official sources often lacks the required microlevel detail needed for precise skills anticipation, leading to broad recommendations rather than specific guidance*.' M&E systems are consequently underdeveloped, with limited digital certification and little systematic follow-up on graduate outcomes.

The absence of effective information and M&E systems hinders policymakers' ability to identify critical skills shortages or oversupply in certain fields. This can lead to a surplus of graduates in some areas, such as digital marketing and pharmacy, while actual market needs remain unmet. The absence of robust national LMIS and centralised data on skills demand and employment trends means that most TVET providers must rely on informal signals, such as student enquiries and general sectoral shifts, as well as ad hoc surveys and direct consultations with employers. This limits the reliability and strategic nature of course planning, often resulting in reactive rather than forward-looking programme

development. One of the TVET centres stated: *'The labour market is volatile. Conditions change rapidly, and we lack up-to-date studies to guide training decisions.'*

This regulatory vacuum has led to the uncontrolled growth of private companies and training centres. Many of these operate with limited oversight and often offer low-quality, inexpensive programmes due to inadequate resources or unqualified trainers. This undermines the reputation of well-established, higher-quality institutions. There has been a proliferation of unlicensed providers, with many non-accredited centres, particularly in the beauty industry and other short-course domains, operating entirely outside formal regulation, often from private homes or salons. Despite long-standing awareness among the authorities, enforcement remains lax, leading to what many view as impunity. *'Meanwhile, compliant providers such as universities, continuous education centres in universities and formal private TVET institutions are subjected to strict internal and external oversight, creating an unequal playing field and distorting fair competition.'*

2.2 Policy framework for TVET

The TVET policy in Palestine has evolved through several key strategic and institutional changes. A major milestone was the adoption of the revised national TVET strategy in 2010, which replaced the original strategy adopted in 1999. To improve practical learning, the TVET strategy promotes WBL and apprenticeships. These initiatives aim to connect students with real work environments, enabling them to apply the knowledge and skills they have learned (Samara, 2018: 2; ETF, 2024a: 34). The curriculum now includes 'green' skills and is aligned with the principles of lifelong learning to promote both individual and social development (ETF, 2024a: 50).

Later education policies, such as the Education Sector Strategic Plan (2017–2022) and the Education Sector Strategy (2021–2023), have further emphasised the role of TVET. These plans promote stronger collaboration between vocational schools and the private sector though WBL and apprenticeship programmes, in which students receive practical, on-the-job training at private firms.

The Strategic Plan 2021–2025 of the MoL has strengthened the overall policy framework by focusing on four main areas: (1) expanding TVET, particularly at the university level; (2) addressing structural and financial gaps to better align education with labour market needs with private sector support; (3) encouraging entrepreneurship and cooperative learning models; and (4) increasing CVET provision through evening classes and targeted programmes for job seekers (MoL, 2021: 93).

In recent years, TVET has undergone significant changes to better meet the needs of the job market and incorporate new technological developments. The MoEHE and the MoL have adopted a Competency-Based Approach (CBA) in secondary vocational schools, particularly for the final two years of secondary education (grades 11 and 12). This approach focuses on equipping students with practical skills that are relevant to real-world work environments (PNA, MoEHE & MoL, 2010; Samara, 2018:5). It also supports the development of 'transversal' competences such as problem-solving, communication and teamwork (ETF, 2024a: 37).

However, the fragmentation of the TVET sector across multiple ministries, has led to significant policy gaps due to the absence of a unified governing body, resulting in a disconnect between educational provisions and the dynamic needs of the labour market. The last comprehensive strategic review of

TVET in Palestine was conducted in 2010. While TVET outcomes have been addressed in the National Employment Strategy, the Labour Sector Plan, the Strategic Plan for Education and Higher Education and the National Review of SDGs, these documents lack an overarching vision for the TVET sector.

The absence of a single national authority to coordinate the sector, coupled with the proposed dissolution of the NTC just three years after its establishment, has resulted in what stakeholders describe as *'a lack of unified strategic vision and poor integration of outputs across institutions.'* This fragmentation has led to overlapping, and sometimes duplicated, interventions. Each ministry or organisation tends to prioritise its own institutional strategy over the advancement of a shared national framework. Consequently, TVET policies and programmes have struggled to provide coherent, sustainable pathways aligned with national development priorities. This strategic gap is particularly concerning given that the last national TVET strategy was adopted almost 15 years ago. Since then, the labour market has undergone significant changes, and the private sector has developed a need for modern, adaptable skills. Without a coherent strategy reflecting these changes, there is a risk that vocational education policy and practice will continue to operate in isolation, with donor-driven projects and short-term interventions setting the agenda rather than a unified, forward-looking national vision.

The absence of a unified national TVET strategy, coupled with limited and unreliable labour market information, means that vocational programmes are often donor-driven or trend-based, rather than aligned with actual economic needs. Outdated curricula and a mismatch in trainer skills further exacerbate this disconnect. Curricula are often described as formal and lacking in linkage to labour market needs. Many programmes are increasingly irrelevant to the rapidly evolving demands of the labour market in areas such as digital marketing, renewable energy and other emerging sectors. While the private sector actively seeks workers with specialised skills, training programmes often fail to provide them, creating a gap between the theoretical knowledge delivered in classrooms and the practical competencies required for employment.

Quality assurance framework

The Education Sector Strategic Plan (2017–2022) and the Education Sector Strategy (2021–2023) support the development of key tools such as the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which was established in 2022, and the Palestinian Occupational Classification (POC). These tools help the formal recognition of skills and qualifications that were previously undocumented. The NQF is designed to provide a basis for quality assurance by establishing learning outcomes and classifying qualifications into a hierarchy of levels. Each level has its own set of descriptors for knowledge, skills and competence. The NQF also promotes transparency, making it easier for students, employers, and TVET providers to understand the quality and value of qualifications.

Although the 2010 TVET strategy emphasised the importance of quality assurance (QA) activities based on the NQF, their actual implementation has been inconsistent and limited. A national QA authority has yet to be established, and key tools such as tracer studies and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems are not used consistently. In addition, the fragmented nature of data collection processes makes it difficult to base policies on reliable evidence or to implement continuous improvements (ETF, 2020). These gaps have prevented the development of a coherent and responsive QA framework that can drive continuous improvement in the sector. Weak QA systems

also pose a significant challenge to improving the effectiveness of TVET in Palestine. Without reliable QA mechanisms, TVET institutions struggle to ensure that their programmes align with these dynamic labour market demands.

Currently, responsibility for distinct parts of TVET quality assurance is divided between several ministries, including the MoEHE, the MoL and the MoSD. There is a notable 'absence of a unified national system to monitor and evaluate the quality and relevance of training.' Existing quality control efforts tend to focus on inspections and inputs rather than on fostering a culture of continuous improvement based on regular feedback and adaptive planning (ETF, 2025b). In addition, data on student performance and outcomes is often 'unorganised and not systematically tracked.'

Inconsistent licensing is a significant shortcoming in the quality assurance policy framework. Although private centres and training programmes are licensed by the MoL, there is a perceived lack of mechanisms to control programme content or curriculum quality after initial licensing. Licensing often focuses on paperwork and physical space rather than outcomes. Critics argue that *'licensing is based on space and documents, not actual training quality or student outcomes.'* Licensing processes, especially for private training centres, often focus on basic physical standards rather than ensuring training quality or overseeing content. There is a *'deep issue related to unifying terminology and content*' and *'a lack of standardisation in programme design, hours and accreditation requirements across institutions*. This enables institutions to launch programmes, such as those in AI, purely because they are popular, rather than being based on genuine market demand.

All this contributes to 'uncontrolled competition,' raising concerns about declining quality and the absence of clear standards or classification for institutions. The proliferation of non-accredited and unlicensed training centres undermines quality and fair competition. These unregulated providers, sometimes operating from *'their private homes,'* often offer cheaper training with no quality control. Meanwhile, compliant institutions bear tax burdens and receive minimal government support. This reflects the weak enforcement of licensing regulations. According to one interviewee, the random proliferation of training centres *'is not a healthy phenomenon'* and requires regulation by the MOL and a review of quality systems. Consequently, concerns have been raised about the quality and relevance of the short courses on offer. Some centres provide cheap programmes primarily to attract students, rather than to meet genuine labour market demand. This unchecked competition often undermines higher quality and established institutions that adhere to more rigorous standards, as students, facing economic hardship, often gravitate towards the cheapest available option regardless of quality.

Although the MoL issues licences and sets standards for training programmes, with periodic visits to verify that the necessary infrastructure is in place, effective oversight after licensing remains extremely limited. A major obstacle is the need to travel across various parts of the West Bank, where Israeli restrictions severely hinder the official inspectors' access to many areas. This has allowed many unlicensed private training centres to operate unchecked. At the same time, the government's prolonged financial crisis has weakened the Ministry's human and technical capacity to carry out consistent monitoring. These combined pressures of occupation restrictions, financial constraints and the rapid proliferation of private centres undermine quality control and perpetuate uneven standards in the TVET sector.

The TVET sector is also burdened by ineffective and excessive regulation, particularly with regard to the licensing and quality assurance of training centres. There is a *'lack of unified standards for programme design, content, hours, or accreditation requirements*.' Crucially, the MoL's licensing process often lacks *'mechanisms for controlling content or quality after initial approval.'* Field visits by the MoL are considered *'superficial,'* and many unlicensed centres are able to operate freely. The random proliferation of training centres is considered *'unhealthy,'* with many operating *'without adequate equipment or qualified staff.'*

In addition, there is considerable ambiguity surrounding accreditation and training standards. Some TVET institutions are unclear about which ministry is responsible for accrediting certain programmes, particularly those that are short-term, hybrid or cross-sectoral. Moreover, the absence of a national framework for regulating trainer qualifications means that anyone can deliver a course, if approved internally by the centre, regardless of their professional background.

Overall, quality assurance of the TVET system is undermined by the functional inactivity of the central coordinating authority, the fragmentation of responsibilities among various government bodies, the absence of unified standards and data, and the uncontrolled proliferation of low-quality providers. These structural weaknesses collectively prevent coherent strategic planning and effective quality assurance. This leads to fragmentation and a lack of standardisation, as well as an inability to monitor and improve training outcomes effectively. It also impedes the establishment of a reliable connection between training outcomes and labour market needs.

Partnership with the private sector for work-based learning

Despite widespread recognition that the involvement of the private sector is crucial for the success of vocational training, this involvement is often limited, sporadic and largely reactive or donor-driven rather than systematically or sustainably embedded. Businesses often view hosting trainees as an additional financial burden due to an unclear return on investment, administrative hurdles, and a lack of financial incentives such as wage subsidies or tax exemptions. Many companies do not see the value in investing in training because it is neither subsidised nor formally recognised within existing policy frameworks. Furthermore, the private sector, particularly small and micro-enterprises, often lack the strategic vision or the internal capacity to define their skills needs or build organised relationships with training institutions.

Despite the emphasis placed on WBL and practical training, particularly in long vocational training programmes lasting one to two years, partnerships between TVET institutions and the private sector are often project-based and unsustainable. The private sector often views WBL as a financial burden rather than an investment, particularly in challenging economic conditions. According to one business owner: *'[W]e are ready to train them, but this process represents a burden to us, in terms of costs, raw materials, insurance, and so on.'* Financial incentives, such as wage subsidies or tax exemptions, are needed to encourage the private sector engagement: *'[T]he private sector must receive incentives*' to remain cooperative. Many TVET institutions struggle to convince the private sector to take on trainees, and there is a lack of standardised mechanisms through which private businesses can communicate their specific needs to TVET providers.

Box 4. Case study: Palestine Polytechnic University, Hebron: Diploma in goldsmithing and precious metals

The Palestine Polytechnic University in Hebron has pioneered a robust vocational education model through its Diploma in Goldsmithing and Precious Metals programme. The programme is notable for its structured collaboration with the Hebron Chamber of Commerce and the Palestinian Union of Precious Metals. These organisations contribute directly to curriculum development, ensuring close alignment with the actual needs of the jewellery industry. The diploma emphasises a highly practical, skills-based approach. Students received training in a wide range of goldsmithing techniques, including shaping, cutting, welding, assembling, finishing, preparing alloys and hallmarking according to Palestinian legal standards. The curriculum incorporates design elements, blending traditional jewellery-making methods with modern technologies such as computer-aided design (CAD) and 3D printing. Courses include engineering drawing, computer applications, English for technical reporting, and life skills such as communication and negotiation, ensuring that graduates' knowledge and skills are well-rounded and adaptable. Hands-on experience is central to the programme. Students complete more than 950 hours of practical training in fully equipped workshops, practising all stages of jewellery production from preparing raw materials preparation to setting stones and finishing pieces. A mandatory internship of at least 200 hours in real industry settings further bridges the gap between the classroom and the workplace by providing direct exposure to labour market conditions. This close industry collaboration, combined with intensive practical learning, has established the programme as an exemplary model of how vocational institutions can ensure market responsiveness. Graduates are highly employable, with clear pathways to workshops, factories and independent businesses, strengthening both the local labour market and the jewellery sector in Palestine.

All of this highlights the urgent need for sustainable funding mechanisms, such as wage subsidies, tax incentives, cost-sharing schemes and performance-based grants, to encourage the private sector to engage in WBL. This must be accompanied by the establishment of a robust national framework, consistent funding and strong political will to regulate and unify the fragmented TVET sector. According to one interviewee, *'Without real financial support for the private sector, specifically wage subsidies for the trainees, it's very hard for the private sector to engage.'*

3. Challenges in access to TVET

Access to TVET is influenced by several key factors, including the availability of educational and financial resources, territorial location and gender. Together, these issues create unequal learning opportunities for different population groups. According to the 2024 ETF monitoring report, support for access to learning in the education system declined by 3.4 points on the System Performance Index (SPI), a composite measure ranging from 0 to 100 that benchmarks progress against defined targets, with 100 representing best performance (ETF, 2024c). This decline raises concerns about barriers to access.

Financial pressures, such as transport costs, are a significant and growing burden on students. A lack of adequate equipment and digital resources also hinders effective tuition. Placements in WBL traineeships and apprenticeships are limited. Other barriers to access include factors that increase student dropout rates and hinder retention. Territorial factors, such as Israeli occupation checkpoints and travel restrictions, limit the mobility of students and staff. Cultural attitudes limit boys' and girls' access to diverse types of courses.

In response to these barriers to participation in TVET courses, various support mechanisms have been developed to help students. These include financial assistance, transport support and academic and personal counselling services. For example, grants for girls are consistently prioritised, particularly in professional training. Additional grants were also provided during the war to support young people affected by financial difficulties. Some programmes provide accommodation and meals alongside counselling services.

3.1 Financial constraints

A primary barrier to practical training stems from significant financial constraints, which affect both students and institutions. Widespread unemployment among workers previously employed in Israel and part-time salaries for public sector employees have reduced family incomes. Families often prioritise basic necessities such as food and utility bills over education, which makes it difficult for students to cover tuition fees or living expenses. Meanwhile, there is a *'high demand for grants and subsidies to cover programme expenses, indicating that tuition fees themselves are a notable burden.'* Although vocational school students are required, or encouraged by their schools, to undertake practical training outside classroom hours, often as part of an apprenticeship programme, many struggle to do so due to the associated costs of transport, training materials and tools, and limited access to adequate resources (Samara, 2024a: 6). Students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds often find it difficult to acquire key competencies due to a lack of resources. The financial pressures faced by individuals and institutions contribute to a persistent mismatch between graduates' skills and labour market needs. This issue is further exacerbated by a lack of clear incentives and a unified national strategy for TVET funding. Many TVET institutions face significant financial constraints that hinder their ability to provide high-quality education and adapt to evolving market needs.

For students and their families, the primary financial impediments include:

- High and increasing transport costs. Price increases in transport, sometimes doubling or even tripling, make regular attendance unaffordable for many students. This burden can force students

to withdraw from programmes, particularly affecting those from remote areas. The cost and safety concerns associated with travel also disproportionately affect women and girls. Students and their families often face *'significantly increased transport costs'* due to closures, checkpoints and security measures, with travel times doubling and costs quadrupling. The high cost of tuition, and transport expenses in particular, present a significant barrier to students accessing vocational training, especially those from remote or economically disadvantaged areas.

- Inability to afford tuition fees and associated expenses. Due to the socioeconomic challenges over the last two years, more families are prioritising basic necessities such as food and rent over educational costs. While some programmes offer free training or scholarships, additional costs for materials and transport can still be prohibitive. Some students facing economic hardship may withdraw early to seek immediate employment, often in the informal sector, to earn an income. Socioeconomic challenges have also led students to seek *'free or low-cost programmes'* due to a collapse in family incomes, for example as a result of unemployment in Israel or reduced public sector salaries.
- Lack of personal equipment. Financial limitations can prevent students from acquiring necessary equipment, such as personal computers, which hinder their ability to practise digital skills.
- Opportunity costs also come into play, as individuals and families must weigh the immediate need for income against the long-term benefits of training. This can lead to students choosing work over continued education.

For TVET institutions and training providers, financial barriers can manifest in several ways:

- Insufficient national budget allocation and heavy donor dependency. The national budget is often insufficient, meaning that most TVET activities to rely heavily on external donor funding. *'A significant proportion of equipment, sometimes as high as 98 %, is acquired through donor projects, making the system unsustainable when funding priorities shift, for instance towards humanitarian relief'*. This financial shortfall limits investment in modern equipment, raw materials, and new specialisations. As a result, equipment sits unused or basic operations are paused due to lack of funds for supplies.
- Challenges in attracting and retaining qualified trainers. Public institutions often offer uncompetitive salaries, making it difficult to compete with the private sector and attract skilled professionals. This results in a shortage of experienced trainers, particularly in high-demand or emerging digital fields such as AI and electric/hybrid vehicle maintenance. The lack of a mechanism for staff development and reward further exacerbates this issue.
- Operational deficits and new government fees. Financial constraints can lead to a lack of basic raw materials, the closure of essential laboratories and modern equipment remaining unused due to unaffordable maintenance or a lack of qualified staff.
- The high cost of specialised technical programmes**,** driven by equipment and trainer fees, means that they are not financially sustainable without external funding. Students often struggle to afford these fees, leading some TVET centres to drastically lower prices to retain enrolment. Many families prioritise food and bills over training fees. A major challenge is the prohibitively high cost of the modern machinery and advanced equipment required for technical specialisations.

- Efforts to ensure inclusion, such as providing specialised support and assisted transportation for students with disabilities, have significantly increased costs, many of which have been reduced or cut altogether. One private training centre explained that *'as a small centre, [they face] additional financial burdens through fees for certificate authentication, programme licensing and related approvals. These further strain already limited budgets and divert resources away from critical needs such as equipment upgrades, trainer development, and student support.'*

In response to these financial challenges, TVET institutions have demonstrated remarkable creativity and resilience. This adaptability has been crucial for their survival, particularly during periods of reduced funding and increased demand for services.

Box 5. Success Story: Partnership between the Al-Eizariya MOL Training Centre and Industrial Islamic Orphans School at Al-Eizariya, Jerusalem

A notable success story in Palestine's vocational education landscape is the emerging collaboration between the recently established MoL Vocational Training Centre in Al-Eizariya and the long-standing Industrial Islamic Orphans School, both located at Al-Eizariya. This partnership is a practical model of resource-sharing and cost optimisation in the TVET sector. The MoL centre in Al-Eizariya, which is still in its formative years, has faced challenges in providing its trainees with access to fully equipped workshops and laboratories. Meanwhile, Dar Al-Aytam, with its long history and well-developed infrastructure, had the necessary facilities and technical resources, but was seeking stronger institutional links to enhance its role in the TVET ecosystem. By pooling their strengths, the two institutions have created a mutually beneficial arrangement. Trainees at the MoL centre now have access to the specialised laboratories and equipment at the Industrial Islamic Orphans School, ensuring they receive hands-on training that would otherwise be financially prohibitive for the MoL centre to provide independently. In return, the Industrial Islamic Orphans School benefits from stronger institutional ties with the Ministry of Labour, greater visibility, and opportunities to align its programmes more closely with national training priorities. This collaboration reduces duplication of investments, fosters cost-sharing, expands access to modern training environments, and strengthens the link between traditional institutions and newly established centres. The model is increasingly seen as a way in which government institutions and long-established vocational schools can collaborate to maximise their impact, optimise their resources and respond more effectively to labour market needs.

One aspect of this adaptation involves diversifying funding sources and implementing cost-saving strategies. Grants and scholarships have been prioritised, often for female students in vocational tracks, to ensure continued access to TVET. In some cases, institutions have awarded dozens of scholarships and covered internship costs in order to fulfil the requirements of employment initiatives. Others have adopted structured fee-discount policies, offering reductions to disadvantaged learners. Special fee waivers, ranging from 50 % to full exemptions, have been approved by governing bodies to support vulnerable groups.

Institutions have also adapted their operations to help students cope with the financial and logistical difficulties, particularly those from rural or conflict-affected areas. One common measure has been the introduction of flexible schedules, such as *'emergency working hours'* for example, running classes only three days a week instead of daily. This adjustment reduces both the travel burden and the associated costs for students coming from different regions. While these adaptations are not ideal for

ensuring continuity of training, they demonstrate how vocational institutions strive to sustain access and participation despite persistent operational constraints.

Despite limited resources, TVET providers have embraced innovative operational approaches to maintaining programme quality. This includes using technology to broaden access and manage training delivery, primarily for the theoretical component of TVET programmes. In some cases, institutions have developed digital platforms to manage course offerings and facilitate hybrid content delivery, thereby enabling international access to vocational education programmes. This digital shift has also proven effective in coping with war-related closures and disruptions. Furthermore, adopting hybrid training models has reduced the need for physical attendance, thereby lowering travel-related expenses and improving accessibility for students.

Box 6. Industrial Islamic Orphans School at Al-Eizariya – Where Learning Meets Production

The Industrial Islamic Orphans School in Al-Eizariya has set itself apart with a rare and powerful approach that integrates real-world production into vocational education. Unlike many institutions that focus solely on training, this school teaches its students to produce, manage and deliver high-quality goods and services. Students are immersed in hands-on learning that directly reflects labour market realities, from crafting furniture for administrative offices to completing commercial printing jobs for institutions such as the Judicial Council. Production-oriented specialisations, such as electricity, air conditioning and car mechanics, are taught from start to finish, ensuring that graduates are fully prepared to meet industry demands.

The school's Print and Binding Department is a national standout, operating as a fully functional service provider with external contracts. Revenues generated from these production activities are directed to an orphans' fund, creating a sense of purpose and community ownership among students as well as generating income. This real-world experience enables many graduates to find immediate employment or set up their own workshops, demonstrating the effectiveness of learning by doing.

Students benefit from trainers who are active in the labour market, and programmes are regularly updated in response to industry needs. Despite facing external challenges, including war-related mobility constraints, economic downturns and funding limitations, the school maintains high enrolment rates, growing student interest, and strong job placement rates. The production-driven model of the Industrial Islamic Orphans School exemplifies how vocational education can be both socially transformative and economically productive.

3.2 Educational resources and equipment

Access to TVET is hindered by a lack of educational resources due to their high cost. Many specialised technical programmes, such as those in electricity, carpentry, vehicle maintenance, and AI applications, require expensive equipment, consumables and software licences. This makes these programmes unaffordable for many learners. For example, one TVET centre states that *'setting up a culinary arts diploma programme requires over NIS 200 000 (around USD 55 000) in equipment and has been postponed due to a lack of funds and high participant costs*.' This financial barrier extends to basic supplies. One centre reporting they *'had to pause a training course because the centre couldn't afford NIS 3 000 (around USD 800) for supplies*.' Government budgets are often insufficient to cover essential operational costs or purchase modern equipment, which *'hinders the development of some*

specialisations or the launch of new programmes.' One MoL TVET centre emphasised that *'without core government funding for running costs, we've been unable to launch key programmes such as Cooking, which requires daily operational expenses we simply cannot cover.'*

Box 7. Case study: Limited equipment and resource challenges in a vocational school

One industrial school under the MoEHE provides a clear example of the challenges that vocational institutions face with regard to equipment and resources. Financial limitations are the most significant barrier to developing new specialisations. Even when there is clear demand in the labour market, programmes cannot be launched without sufficient funding. For instance, while the Ministry could approve the smart buildings specialisation, it did not provide financial support for the proposed workshop, which required advanced equipment and a suitable space. Consequently, the programme could not be established despite its potential relevance.

The school also faces serious obstacles in securing specialised and costly equipment. In renewable energy training, for example, essential items such as inverters and battery banks can cost more than USD 100 000. Currently, the lab operates with only twelve aging batteries and three inverters shared among seventeen students, forcing large groups to work on a single device. This shortage severely limits the level of practical, hands-on training that can be provided. Frequent equipment breakdowns, coupled with a lack of spare parts, further hinder the learning process. More advanced technologies, such as electric and hybrid cars costing around NIS 500 000, remain entirely out of reach, meaning that students cannot engage with the latest industry practices.

Much of the school's progress in developing modern programmes has depended on external support. For example, the renewable energy specialisation and its core equipment, including panels and inverters, would not have been possible without donor funding from the Italian organisation V.I.S. Without such support, schools cannot secure the advanced resources needed to ensure their training remains relevant to market needs. This reliance on external donors highlights a structural vulnerability that jeopardises the long-term sustainability of vocational training.

Even when equipment is available, it is often underutilised due to a shortage of qualified trainers who can operate and teach using modern tools**.** Some institutions report inadequate infrastructure and a lack of raw materials, as well as closed laboratories. New equipment sometimes remains unused due to a shortage of trained personnel or maintenance support. There is also a lack of structured partnerships with industry for shared laboratories or equipment**,** resulting in a reliance on informal agreements rather than long-term commitments for the sharing of resources or co-investment. Limited institutional capacity and resource availability restricts the number of students who can be accommodated and affects the quality of training overall. For TVET providers, acquiring expensive modern equipment is a major obstacle, as institutions are heavily reliant on external donor funding for such investments. One TVET centre notes that *'Without supporters or funders, it is very difficult to provide such capabilities, especially large equipment,'* adding that many specialised machines, costing 'very high' amounts, are beyond the reach of most centres.

Shortages of equipment and inadequate facilities limit the institutions' capacity to enrol all potential students and provide high-quality training. This issue is particularly acute for specialised programmes that demand unique or costly equipment. For instance, some programmes, such as the cooling and air conditioning programme of a TVET centre, have been *'halted for more than a year due to a shortage of materials.'* This is in addition to the fact that *'advanced equipment in centres (often donor-funded) may not be used due to a lack of qualified trainers to operate it, or a lack of raw materials*.' This

highlights a deeper systemic flaw: investment in physical resources is not matched by investment in human capacity. There is a recognised shortage of experienced trainers who are capable of using and teaching with modern equipment.

Digital access and innovation

There are inherent limitations to the delivery of remote and digital training when it comes to teaching hands-on, practical skills. For specialisations that heavily depend on practice, such as automotive mechanics, carpentry, electrical installation, culinary arts, hairdressing and beauty therapy, remote learning poses a significant challenge. As one student explained, *'Remote practical training was difficult, especially since our training courses require manual skills.'*

Although digital platforms have increased accessibility and enabled uninterrupted learning, they cannot fully replace the workshops, laboratories and face-to-face interaction required in these fields. Skills such as operating machinery, handling tools and practising safety protocols are best acquired through direct practice. Without this hands-on exposure, graduates risk entering the labour market with gaps in their technical competence, which undermines the effectiveness of vocational training in meeting real-world skill demands.

Furthermore, the high cost of specialised digital equipment and software required for modern technical programmes can create financial barriers for training providers, which in turn limits the availability of such cutting-edge courses: *'Fields like AI, digital printing and electric/hybrid car maintenance demand software licenses and hardware, [and] our institution can't afford the investment without donor support'*. This financial burden can prevent institutions from offering innovative, digitally driven programmes, thereby limiting access to these in-demand skills.

A shortage of qualified trainers with up-to-date market expertise in emerging digital and technical fields poses a significant barrier to delivering high-quality, innovation-driven training. As one TVET centre noted, it is particularly difficult to find instructors who are proficient in advanced areas such as AI applications or hybrid vehicle maintenance: *'It is challenging to find instructors who are proficient in advanced areas like AI applications or hybrid vehicle maintenance.'* They added: *'Trainers for AI-related courses are described as very expensive and hard to find someone who both understands the topic and can teach it properly.'* This shortage often forces institutions to rely on academic staff, who are knowledgeable in theory, but lack hands-on industry experience. This reduces the practical relevance of training in technologically advanced areas. As another stakeholder observed, even when digital technologies and modern equipment are available, they *'may not be used due to a lack of qualified training staff to operate it.'*

Finally, although digital evaluation and certification systems are being developed, significant gaps remain in their full functionality, particularly with regard to systematic quality tracking and impact assessment. The combination of this weakness in the digital monitoring infrastructure and the absence of a national or sectoral pool of certified trainers illustrates that the broader digital ecosystem for assuring training quality is still immature, which may undermine confidence in digitally enhanced qualifications. Stakeholders also emphasise that the rapid evolution of job requirements means that technology-integrated training can quickly become outdated unless it is continuously revised and

upgraded. As one participant explained, training must be adapted on an ongoing basis to ensure that learners receive *'proper training opportunities using technology'* that remain relevant to market needs.

Box 8. Silat adh-Dhahr Secondary Industrial School– A Model of Excellence in Palestinian TVET

Located in Jenin Governorate, Silat adh-Dhahr Secondary Industrial School is a leading example of resilience and innovation in vocational education. The school offers twelve specialisations across industrial and vocational qualification paths, including dedicated programmes for girls, and integrates modern technologies such as hybrid and electric vehicles, as well as smart building systems. Eighty per cent of the curriculum is focused on practical training, enabling students to engage in real production processes and gain experience that prepares them directly for employment. Despite funding limitations and the impact of war on transport and training opportunities, the school maintains high success rates and consistent enrolment, enjoying an ever-growing reputation among employers. Its commitment to quality teaching, active industry collaboration, vocational guidance and gender inclusion makes it a popular choice for students from across the region, including those from villages near Jerusalem. By combining modern facilities, dedicated staff and strong links with the labour market, Silat adh-Dhahr Secondary Industrial School demonstrates how a local institution can provide transformative opportunities and shape a skilled and motivated workforce.

3.3 Barriers to work-based learning opportunities

Despite the policy commitment to providing appropriate and relevant work-based learning opportunities, the TVET sector faces several barriers to effective practical training, including WBL and apprenticeships. These barriers encompass financial, institutional, societal and logistical factors, most of which are exacerbated by the Israeli occupation. The limited availability of high-quality WBL, coupled with a mismatch between training specialisations and market demand, contributes to a shortage of skilled workers in key sectors, particularly industry (Samara, 2024b: 97). Apprenticeships tend to be unaccredited, often unpaid and poorly coordinated with the private sector (ILO, 2018).

The uptake of WBL opportunities is limited by the financial cost to many private businesses, which has increased due to recent economic downturns and war-related closures. Shortages of educational equipment, inadequate facilities and limited staffing mean that the number of students who can be accommodated is limited. Many TVET institutions have waiting lists for popular programmes or are unable to offer certain specialisations due to resource constraints.

WBL opportunities in IVET are not well-established. While some vocational schools have introduced apprenticeships, their impact is limited due to a lack of structured collaboration with the private sector and an absence of a formal regulatory framework (ETF, 2024c: 21). Furthermore, alternative forms of WBL, such as structured work placements, short-term work experience programme or dual education systems, have not yet been systematically implemented, despite their potential to provide more feasible pathways for practical learning within the Palestinian TVET system. These gaps prevent students from gaining the on-the-job experience that is crucial for improving their employability and bridging the divide between training and actual work. Although some schools attempt to simulate work environments through extracurricular activities, these efforts fall short of providing the full benefits of formal WBL.

There is also a mismatch between the duration of practical training and employer expectations, with short-term courses sometimes failing to allocate sufficient time for practical immersion. Furthermore, the absence of a national framework for evaluating the quality and consistency of the practical component of short-term training leads to unequal practical exposure and difficulties in certificate recognition by employers. This results in some centres claiming to offer practical training but delivering mostly theory, with little oversight.

Institutions acknowledge the inconsistent quality of WBL. As one interviewee noted, there is a *'lack of institutional follow-up'* on training content, meaning that much of the learning is inconsistent and may not align with market needs. The problem is further compounded by weak career guidance: an estimated *'50 % of new students do not have a clear idea of their desired specialisation'* at the point of entry, and guidance often begins too late with choices being shaped more by teacher preferences or institutional competition than by genuine career pathways.

The private sector's reluctance to engage fully with TVET poses an obstacle to ensuring access to quality learning. This reluctance largely stems from the perception that educational resources are a burden rather than an investment and this has a direct impact on students' ability to gain practical, market-relevant skills. Many private sector establishments, particularly in economically struggling areas such as the northern West Bank, view WBL as an *'additional financial burden'* rather than an investment opportunity. Even in normal times, many employers were sceptical of the value of WBL. The ongoing economic and security crises have had a severe impact on businesses, with many operating at low capacity or having to close entirely. This paralysis makes it difficult for companies to bear the costs associated with training. Meanwhile, the government has not offered any incentives, such as tax exemptions, to encourage the private sector to participate in training. This further hinders the private sector's willingness to contribute effectively to TVET.

With limited training opportunities in the private sector, TVET centres seek to strengthen their in-house training capacities. However, they face significant financial constraints when it comes to acquiring modern, specialised equipment such as CNC machines, laser cutters, advanced inverters, battery banks for renewable energy and electric/hybrid cars. Thus, the challenge remains daunting. *'We are expected to prepare students for the future of work, but without the tools of the future,'* noted one vocational school director. The high cost of advanced equipment, coupled with limited government support and unsustainable donor funding, means that many centres struggle to provide the level of practical training required by today's labour market.

The limited capacity of small businesses is also a key impediment, particularly in rural areas, which are often the destination for TVET students who are unable to access larger enterprises in urban centres due to checkpoints and occupation-related barriers. Most private sector partners are micro- and small enterprises with only *'modest capabilities.'* Consequently, they often struggle to consistently meet training demands or establish structured partnerships with TVET institutions without significant external investment to bolster their capabilities.

WBL placement efforts are often shaped by the operational realities faced by TVET institutions, particularly restrictions on mobility and resource limitations. In order to adapt, schools and training centres usually try to find opportunities for students close to their homes, reducing the burden of transportation and minimising exposure to checkpoints and other obstacles. For example, *'a student*

from Ramallah would normally be placed in the Ramallah area, even if the original scheduled training place is in in Nablus.' This reflects a strategy of tailoring placements not only to market demand but also to the geographical and political constraints that shape daily life. This adaptive approach shows how institutions try to balance employability goals with practical accessibility and operational feasibility challenges.

To overcome the reluctance of private businesses to host trainees, often due to financial constraints, some donor-supported TVET organisations have introduced financial incentives, such as wage subsidies and internships, to fund WBL opportunities. They have also provided full scholarships to help students secure practical training, enabling them to bypass businesses' cost concerns. This proactive financial support is particularly important when traditional WBL opportunities are limited due to the economic circumstances.

3.4 Dropout and retention

The issue of dropout from TVET programmes is complex and deeply rooted in socioeconomic pressures, geographical and security challenges, prevalent social perceptions and institutional weaknesses. These factors have been significantly intensified by recent conflicts. Some providers have reported dropout rates of *'20–25 % due to rising transport costs and the worsening economic situation'*. One of the most significant factors driving dropout is severe financial hardship. Students face dramatically increased transport costs, with one learner noting a surge from *'NIS 10-12 to NIS 70-80'* for a daily commute, making regular attendance unsustainable for many. A collapse in family income, often caused by parents losing their jobs, can directly impact a student's ability to continue their education.

The impact of the recent war and ongoing political instability has exacerbated these challenges. The war has caused disruption to academic calendars, damaged facilities and displaced staff and students. It has also exacerbated existing financial hardships and security concerns, making it even harder for students to continue their studies, with some centres reporting *'more than half of their students drop[ping] out'* immediately after the war.

Many institutions, particularly those at Level 1 (CVET), have noted a significant decrease in student commitment, with some reporting that *'more than 50 % of the courses experienced dropout because students were unable to reach classes or faced severe financial difficulties*.' One more centre noted that *'approximately 30 to 40 students out of 220 were forced to leave school due to factors like difficult roads and families losing their income, which made covering transport costs impossible*.' Students from affected regions often face considerable financial burdens, and security checkpoints and road closures further exacerbate these access issues, compelling some students from industrial schools to discontinue their studies or switch academic tracks entirely in order to be able to access schools closer to their homes.

Geographical barriers and pervasive security concerns further exacerbate dropout rates. Road closures, military checkpoints and longer travel times transform what used to be '15 minutes' into 'an hour, an hour and a half on the road,' or even 'hours,' making consistent attendance unpredictable and dangerous. These mobility restrictions disproportionately affect female students, who face additional cultural and safety concerns when travelling long distances. As one account explains, some female

students from Jerusalem withdrew due to 'their parents' fears,' highlighting the very real risks involved in commuting.

Deeply ingrained social and cultural perceptions also play a critical role. Society's persistent preference for traditional university education over vocational education often means that TVET is viewed as a less prestigious option, even when academic degrees offer limited job prospects. Some students, particularly girls, may initially enrol in TVET programmes not out of genuine interest but as a *'passage to academic education'* at university. However, they eventually withdraw when their true academic aspirations come into conflict with the vocational track.

Box 9. Resilience and Low Dropout Rates in Palestinian TVET Institutions

Several TVET institutions in Palestine have successfully maintained remarkably low dropout rates, even in challenging circumstances, by adopting strategies that address financial, logistical and academic barriers. For example, enrolment at the Industrial Islamic Orphans School in Al-Eizariya has increased rather than fallen. Although a few students, mainly younger apprenticeship trainees, were forced to withdraw due to transport costs and challenging routes, only six students from the industrial track dropped out, which reflects strong retention. This resilience is supported by the school's production-oriented training model, in which students learn through hands-on practice, including trial and error, in real-world contexts. Revenues from production are used to support orphaned students, thereby reinforcing motivation and a sense of belonging. Long-standing contracts with institutions such as the Judicial Council and the Ministry of Endowments also provide stable, practical training opportunities.

The Lutheran World Federation Vocational Training Centre in Ramallah reported 'increased acceptance' after the war and has maintained a 'very low' dropout rate. The centre's success lies in its ability to adapt to crises: drawing on lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, it offered online training and localised sessions in students' communities during mobility restrictions. They also tackle financial barriers directly by prioritising grants for girls from disadvantaged families, thus mitigating the social bias that often favours educational investment in boys.

Similarly, Hijjawi College achieved strong student retention, with enrolment rising from 770 in 2021 to 972 in 2023. Administrators noted that dropout rates 'did not affect the numbers; the number remained stable.' This is supported by project-based funding, which secures resources; online lecture delivery, with 80 % attendance via Zoom; and the introduction of new, market-driven specialisations, such as car body repair and hybrid/electric vehicle technologies, developed in collaboration with private sector partners.

The common success factors across these cases are clear: proactive financial support for students, flexible and adaptive learning delivery, strong labour market linkages to ensure programme relevance, and comprehensive student support systems. Together, these approaches demonstrate that with the right strategies, TVET institutions can sustain student engagement and achievement, even in the most difficult contexts.

A substantial number of dropouts stem from a mismatch between students' expectations and the reality of the programmes or unclear career pathways. Students may realise too late that the training does not guarantee a clear career path or that employers will recognise their certificate. Without structured career guidance from schools or career advisors, many students choose specialisations *'without sufficient guidance*,*'* often lacking access to crucial *'labour market data or employment statistics.'* This leads to misalignment between their chosen field and actual market needs. Some individuals enrol in 'trendy' programmes such as beauty or digital media, but then 'leave when they see how much discipline or practice it takes.'

Institutional shortcomings further complicate the issue of student retention. Most training centres lack structured strategies, such as formal retention policies, early dropout alerts and comprehensive counselling services. Dropout is often handled reactively, with students simply being marked as absent, rather than being the subject of proactive intervention.

In response to these pervasive challenges, many educational providers have proactively implemented various strategies to improve student retention and course completion rates Adopting hybrid education models, which combine online and face-to-face learning, has been a crucial adaptation for mitigating movement restrictions and maintaining student engagement. One institution successfully integrated a new model by offering Zoom classes alongside short in-person meetings for those who could attend, proving effective in enabling students to *'succeed in some courses and continue in them.'* Additionally, institutions have shown flexibility in terms of financial support and scheduling, with some offering accommodation and instalment payments to alleviate the financial burden on students. To ensure continuity, practical components, which are vital for vocational training, were often managed through 'intensive' laboratory sessions or rescheduled to accommodate student availability.

3.5 Territorial and mobility barriers to access

Geographical barriers and security concerns are ever-present, making it extremely difficult for students to commute to training centres and work placements. Students from remote areas face long travel times and increased costs. The financial strain facing students and trainees extends far beyond tuition fees, creating a multidimensional barrier to effective participation in TVET. While the persistent demand for grants and subsidies indicates that programme costs are a burden, restricted access to training locations, particularly in urban centres where private enterprises are concentrated, exacerbates this challenge. Many students, particularly those from rural and marginalised areas, struggle to commute daily due to high transport costs, checkpoints and long travel times.

The location of a TVET programme significantly affects its accessibility and appeal. TVET institutions in urban areas have better transport links and access to more potential employers. These areas are more accessible and more appealing to students. Conversely, students from rural areas face greater challenges, such as expensive and limited transport options, which can deter them from enrolling. Additionally, formal IVET programmes often have age restrictions, which further limit access for rural students or those who have experienced delays in their education (ETF, 2024b, p. 21).

Geographical and security constraints also hinder access to practical training opportunities. Students from remote areas face dramatically increased transport costs and longer travel times due to security checkpoints and restrictions, which make regular attendance difficult or impossible. *'The ongoing conflict has rendered many labs inaccessible, preventing students from completing hands-on components of their programmes.'* Safety concerns relating to occupation checkpoints and violence perpetrated by Israeli settlers, particularly when female students are travelling to distant TVET centres or on WBL assignments, lead families to discourage their participation or cause students to drop out entirely.

To mitigate this issue, some TVET centres have adopted local solutions, such as enabling trainees to undertake their practical training in facilities closer to their homes. While these arrangements reduce logistical difficulties, they have simultaneously widened the skills gap. Rural enterprises often lack the

infrastructure, advanced equipment or qualified mentors required to provide practical training of a standard comparable to that of urban-based institutions. As a result, trainees often acquire only partial or outdated skills, which undermines their employability and diminishes the overall credibility of TVET outcomes. This situation also puts significant strain on training institutions. Monitoring and following up on trainees have become increasingly difficult, with staff struggling to access distant or fragmented training locations. The lack of strong institutional partnerships with alternative rural enterprises exacerbates this challenge further, leaving many trainees without sufficient oversight or structured guidance. Consequently, some students drop out altogether, unable to bridge the gap between theoretical instruction and practical skills acquisition.

Although some TVET centres have introduced online and blended learning models as alternatives, these are inadequate substitutes for hands-on training. Vocational education is inherently practical and requires access to well-equipped laboratories, modern machinery and industry-standard tools. Without these resources, students cannot fully develop the competencies required by the labour market. Digital platforms have substantially expanded the reach and accessibility of short courses, which is crucial during periods of conflict. One platform, for example, offers AI-supported training selection, enabling even international students to enrol and helping institutions survive war-related closures. Remote and hybrid learning models, including Zoom-based courses, have been adopted to overcome geographical, mobility, and time constraints. One student noted, *'After the war, we shifted to hybrid and Zoom-based delivery. Students from remote areas and even other countries started to access courses they otherwise couldn't.'*

3.6 Students with disabilities

Resource limitations are further exacerbated for centres serving persons with disabilities, as vocational rehabilitation for this group 'is inherently complex and costly — both for families and the government' due to the need for specialised equipment and staff. The broader financial crisis has led to the cessation of services such as assisted transport for students with disabilities to training centres, exacerbating access challenges.

The financial crisis has severely constrained access for students with disabilities, undermining specialised transport services and exposing the persistent lack of accessible infrastructure and appropriately trained staff. Some TVET centres lack basic accessibility infrastructure, such as lifts, which makes them inaccessible for students with motor disabilities. Furthermore, the only public TVET centre dedicated to students with disabilities in the northern West Bank is in Nablus. Before the war, this centre enrolled students from Nablus city and the surrounding rural areas, as well as from other governorates such as Jenin and Tubas. The MoSD had arranged special free transport to facilitate their access to training in Nablus. However, since the start of the war, attendance has largely been limited to students living in Nablus. This decline is due to a combination of factors: frequent checkpoints restricting movement, and the MoSD's inability to provide specialised transportation due to a sharp reduction in centre's budget caused by the government's financial crisis.

Box 10. Resilience of young people with disabilities pursuing vocational education

At the Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Vocational Rehabilitation Centre in Nablus, which operates under the MoSD, interviews with young trainees with disabilities have revealed an inspiring story that is deeply challenging at the same time. Many spoke about the hope they felt when they first heard about vocational training opportunities — hope that they could learn a skill, build confidence and take control of their future.

Yet their journeys are often filled with invisible barriers. Some explained that specialised courses are not fully accessible, with facilities lacking ramps and tools not adapted for visual or physical impairments. The centre's limited resources also make it difficult to open inclusive programmes for a small number of students. A few even described experiences of rejection, whether due to their own type of disability or their families' financial circumstances.

Transportation was another recurring theme. Several trainees stressed how expensive and exhausting it is to reach the centre, particularly for students living in remote areas. Restrictions on movement, checkpoints and post-war closures make the journey unpredictable and sometimes unsafe. One student noted that the physical and emotional toll of navigating these obstacles was so heavy that many peers eventually dropped out, despite being highly motivated to continue learning.

Even for those who managed to enrol and succeed in class, new hurdles arose during practical training or job placement. Interviewees noted that many employers hesitate to accept people with disabilities due to fear, stigma or misconceptions about productivity and safety. This means that field training placements are scarce and job opportunities are limited, not because of a person's ability, but because of entrenched societal bias. Inside the centre, students often needed extra time or specialist support. As several students pointed out, there was also a shortage of trained professionals. Without adequate psychosocial or peer support, some students felt isolated and demotivated.

Despite this, the interviews highlighted a common theme: resilience. Many young people with disabilities at the centre emphasised their determination to persevere. Their stories reflect courage, hope and a deep desire to contribute meaningfully to society. As one participant put it, they are not only overcoming obstacles — they are 'rewriting what is possible.'

Conventional TVET institutions often lack the necessary facilities and adapted specialisations, restricting access to access training. Many institutions lack emergency or contingency plans to ensure continuity of training during access disruptions caused by closures or security incidents. Nevertheless, specialised centres strive to improve access by conducting personalised assessments to match training to abilities, customising content and duration, and implementing support systems that include coordination with NGOs, personal counselling and, in some cases, providing meals or financial aid to offset direct costs.

3.7 Gender disparities

Persistent barriers to access in TVET are shaped by gender disparities, stemming from a complex interplay of sociocultural norms, economic realities and security concerns, which particularly affect female students.

Despite a gradual shift in societal awareness, evidenced by an increasing number of girls enrolling in subjects such as interior design, industrial design and applied arts, vocational education continues to face entrenched social stigma, particularly for female students. Parents often prioritise university pathways over vocational training, even when academic degrees do not guarantee employment, reflecting the higher social status of higher education. As one stakeholder noted: *'Vocational certificates for girls are frequently regarded as symbolic rather than credible qualifications for professional employment or independent livelihoods.'* Furthermore, parental influence is particularly strong in shaping the vocational specialisation choices of daughters, often limiting their autonomy. This persistent cultural bias undermines the potential of vocational training to serve as a viable and empowering option for young women.

While some girls pursue vocational training out of genuine interest or passion (e.g. community performing arts), others may choose these paths simply to avoid academic challenge in the scientific stream (science subjects Tawjihi). This highlights a lack of informed choice, driven the perception that these alternatives are easier rather than being aligned with career aspirations.

Although deep-rooted social perceptions have historically stigmatised TVET as inferior to university education, the NTC notes that such attitudes have largely diminished and are now limited, particularly within secondary vocational education. As reflected by enrolment statistics, the main challenge today lies less in societal attitudes and more in the system's limited absorptive capacity, which remains minor compared to general education. Recent data from selected vocational schools across several Palestinian directorates shows that the number of applicants to vocational programmes significantly exceeds the number of accepted students, reflecting high demand and limited capacity rather than low interest. Nevertheless, traces of bias persist in some areas — for instance, vocational certificates, especially for girls, are still sometimes viewed as *'merely symbolic rather than a pathway to professional work or independent living.'* Government hiring practices further reinforce this imbalance, as university graduates, even when less technically skilled, are often favoured over TVET diploma holders.

TVET institutions are aware of social and cultural barriers and actively try to address them through awareness campaigns, school visits and vocational guidance. They also adapt by offering more female-friendly specialisations and providing necessary support services.

Female students face disproportionately greater challenges due to geographical distance, security checkpoints, road closures, and settler attacks, which make travel unpredictable and dangerous. *'Parents' fears for their daughters' safety and privacy in mixed-gender or distant training centres are a real barrier.'*

Girls are often steered towards traditionally 'female' fields such as beauty, cooking, office management and various design disciplines. Conversely, female participation in traditionally male-dominated technical fields such as vehicle maintenance, carpentry and electrical work remains extremely limited due to entrenched stereotypes. Despite these trends, institutions are actively working to introduce new specialisations designed to attract more women, including areas within ICT and technology.

As previously highlighted, the absence of effective vocational guidance reinforces gender stereotypes. Many female students select specialisations based on personal interests or societal stereotypes rather

than informed career planning or labour market needs. Apprenticeships remain predominantly available to male students. Although female learners often demonstrate strong commitment and high attendance in IVET programmes, dropout rates in some diploma programmes are estimated at 10–15 % due to economic hardship and security concerns. The overall rating for female access to initial TVET and quality of learning outcomes is 'Needs some improvement,' compared to 'Adequate' for males in both areas.

In CVET, female adult learners also encounter a mixed landscape. CVET programmes offer flexibility and quicker entry into the labour market, attracting women to practical, skills-focused fields, particularly given the high unemployment rate among female university graduates. There is a growing push to increase women's participation in technology and digitalisation, and many women are acquiring advanced digital skills independently. However, financial burdens, geographical and mobility restrictions, and household responsibilities (including a lack of affordable childcare) disproportionately affect women from disadvantaged backgrounds, leading to dropouts or non-enrolment.

Box 11. Alia – Breaking Barriers in Car Maintenance

Alia, a student at Hisham Hijjawi College in Nablus, successfully completed a two-year diploma in car mechanics, defying gender stereotypes in a traditionally male-dominated technical field. Although initially deemed ineligible due to her academic background in literature, she seized the opportunity when a scholarship became available. With unwavering family support, she enrolled out of genuine interest, rather than for the scholarship itself. Despite beginning her studies during a period of conflict, Alia encountered no institutional barriers. She received strong encouragement from her tutors and, although a few male classmates questioned the presence of women in the programme, she remained focused and graduated top of her class.

While reactions from her community were largely positive, some were surprised to see a woman studying to become a mechanic. Alia adapted pragmatically by choosing vehicle inspection over heavy manual repair, aligning her specialisation with roles that suited her strengths. She undertook a structured training placement through the college's long-standing partnership with Yaish Company, a private firm that has worked with Hisham Hijjawi College for more than 15 years, which supported her journey. While Alia's personal account does not mention the company by name, its collaborative model reflects the framework under which she was trained. Yaish Company has extensive experience in training female engineers, including several from Alia's college, and it notes that inspection roles are particularly well suited to women.

Throughout her experience, Alia was treated with respect and fairness. She actively encourages other young women to enter the field, emphasising that initial challenges, such as lifting or working under vehicles, can be overcome with practice and persistence. Her message is clear: 'Nothing is impossible' for girls who aspire to succeed in non-traditional professions.

Institutions have worked to expand training opportunities for diverse groups, including women, people with disabilities (PwD), and students from disadvantaged backgrounds. These efforts include opening new specialisations to attract more women such as cooking, beauty and ICT. The number of female students enrolling in certain subjects has increased, even in some traditionally male-dominated engineering fields, although this trend is not solely due to the war. Considerable progress has been made in overcoming social and cultural constraints regarding women entering the education system in areas such as beauty, design, and food processing. Childcare facilities, such as those at the YMCA VTC in Jericho, have also significantly eased access for mothers enabling them to pursue vocational training.

Box 12. The nursery at the YMCA Vocational Training Centre – Jericho

The YMCA Vocational Training Centre in Jericho has pioneered an on-site nursery facility dedicated to supporting women, especially mothers, in accessing vocational education and training. For many women, particularly those with young children, the lack of affordable and reliable childcare can be a significant barrier to enrolling in TVET programmes. The nursery directly addresses this challenge by providing a safe, supervised and nurturing environment for children while their mothers are attending classes. This enables trainees to concentrate on their studies, safe in the knowledge that their children are safe. The service is also available to the children of staff members, fostering a more inclusive and supportive learning environment.

The idea for the nursery came about during the COVID-19 pandemic, when school closures meany that staff had to bring their children to the centre. At the time, children had to be accommodated in makeshift spaces, such as the computer lab, which was both inconvenient and unsuitable. Recognising this urgent need, the centre transformed an unused bathroom area into a fully renovated, partitioned, and child-friendly nursery that meets safety and educational standards. Reportedly the only licensed nursery of its kind within a vocational training centre in the West Bank, the facility operates for a nominal fee. Although it incurs additional operational costs for the institution, it is considered a strategic investment in women's empowerment and equal access to training. The nursery offers structured, age-appropriate programmes and activities, supporting children's developmental growth while their mothers pursue learning.

The centre has seen a direct increase in female enrolment owing to the availability of childcare, with many trainees citing it as the deciding factor in their decision to join. This initiative demonstrates how removing practical barriers can translate into real opportunities and contribute to gender equity in TVET, empowering more women to enter the labour market or start their own businesses.

4. The quality and relevance of TVET

According to the ETF System Monitoring Report (ETF, 2024c), there have been a slight improvement in the quality and relevance of TVET in Palestine, with an increase of 1.7 SPI points since 2023. This reported progress raises important questions about the underlying contributing factors contributing, particularly with regard to TVET opportunities. However, it may not be possible for these positive trends to be sustained due to the severe impact of the war in the past two years, which has created conditions that could reverse or significantly alter the trajectory of these reported gains.

It is clear that TVET centres are committed to quality improvement. Many have established internal vetting processes for trainers and course materials. As one provider explained, *'Every trainer must submit their teaching content and CV, and internal committees either approve or revise these based on subject expertise.'* Continuous improvement is pursued through curriculum updates, instructor training and investment in modern equipment. Training content is frequently designed in consultation with experts and aligned with student needs, while workshops and daily practice emphasise practical application. The strong emphasis placed on practical applications in workshops, daily practice and structured assessments help to align programmes with labour market needs. In some cases, WBL is integrated as a mandatory element and supported through regular checks to ensure compliance with licensing and national standards. In other cases, digital systems for monitoring and evaluation are being piloted with the aim of tracking quality more systematically. Quality checks, such as supervising tests, inspecting facilities and monitoring instructors, are regularly carried out to maintain standards and compliance.

Despite these efforts, severe challenges continue to hinder the achievement of consistent quality across the sector. The absence of a unified national framework for curricula, trainer qualifications and monitoring mechanisms has resulted in fragmentation and inconsistent standards. Many curricula are outdated and have remained unchanged for decades, failing to align with evolving market needs. Some donors have funded initiatives involving private sector specialists in the design of market-responsive curricula that go beyond official, often outdated ministerial standards, for example Enable used 'expert workshops.'

While the MoL licenses the training programmes of private TVET centres, monitoring and supervision remain a challenge due to the growing number of providers, as well as the spread of informal, unlicensed centres operating from homes or areas beyond the reach of MoL monitoring. This is particularly problematic in rural areas and in Area C, where the Israeli occupation imposes additional obstacles that limit oversight and quality control. Moreover, competition between private training centres has led to a trend of redundancy and imitation in programme offerings. Some institutions duplicate courses without innovation and sometimes deliver them to a low standard. Programmes are often launched even when centres lack qualified trainers or the necessary infrastructure, which further undermines the quality and credibility of training provision.

Nevertheless, some institutions have found ways to successfully navigate or adapt to these challenges in the CVET and short courses sector, as shown in Box 3.

Box 13. Case Study: Lutheran World Federation Vocational Training Centre in Ramallah– Actions to overcome regulatory and operational hurdles

In response to Palestine's fragmented TVET landscape, weak WBL integration and conflict-related constraints, the Lutheran World Federation Vocational Training Centre in Ramallah has adopted a proactive approach, focusing on adaptive and market-driven actions. In order to maintain access during road closures and rising transport costs, the centre has introduced online components and decentralised training in local areas, building on experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recognising financial barriers, the centre offered targeted grants, particularly to girls, to ensure inclusivity despite economic hardship. At the same time, it has continuously modernised its curricula and facilities in line with labour market shifts, introducing advanced programmes such as CNC and laser engineering, smart building telecommunications, and electric vehicle mechanics. Despite the dominance of micro- and small enterprises, the centre strengthened its apprenticeship model by embedding students directly in workplaces, where many received salaries and practical roles, thus enhancing their employability. These actions produced tangible results: enrolment increased after the conflict as demand for practical skills grew, with graduates consistently securing employment thanks to their applied training. The centre ensured that its CVET and short courses remained modern, relevant and responsive to evolving labour market needs through systematic curriculum updates, local adaptations and robust WBL integration.

TVET organisations have also shown flexibility in how they deliver services and manage resource. In the face with mobility restrictions and a shortage of qualified and affordable trainers, many have adopted a hybrid education model that incorporates online learning. Some have leveraged existing staff by reassigning them to new, in-demand specialisations, such as smart buildings, based on their practical experience. Others rely on their reputation and direct requests from employers to secure placements and achieve high employment rates for their graduates.

4.1 Monitoring and follow-up by TVET providers

In the absence of a national monitoring system, most TVET institutions rely on internal quality control mechanisms to track graduate outcomes, evaluate employer satisfaction, and measure alignment between training and market needs. Oversight bodies rarely request outcome data or follow up on whether programmes lead to employment, which weakens accountability and the system's learning loops. However, there are significant gaps in the assessment and monitoring carried out by TVET providers. For example, digital evaluation and certification systems are not widely implemented, and student feedback is often manual and irregular.

A significant challenge is the weak follow-up and outcome tracking of graduates. The collection and sharing of data on post-course employment outcomes is limited, which reduces the number of feedback loops that inform strategic planning. The absence of a robust monitoring system makes it difficult to assess programme effectiveness or track employability, as *'students leave the centre and we never hear from them again. There's no tracking or feedback; no one knows if the training actually helped them.'* This severely hinders the ability to assess the effectiveness of the programme or demonstrate its impact on employability or skill acquisition. A lack of systematic follow-up and evaluation diminishes the quality of training. This also applies to WBL, where there are *'significant gaps in the methodology of supervision and follow-up'* and institutions often *'do not treat follow-up and evaluation with sufficient seriousness or organisation*.'

Monitoring systems are weak as feedback is irregular and often manual — a situation that is compounded by incomplete digital certification systems. One practitioner observed that *'there is no*

follow-up or evaluation of students once they enter the labour market,' adding: 'We do not know what skills they actually need once they graduate.' One strategy adopted by TVET institutions has been to proactively engage with the private sector and local communities in order to gather real-time labour market information, thus bypassing the absence of a centralised, reliable labour market information system.

Box 14. Kalandia training centre's monitoring system linking training to employment

The Kalandia Training Centre is a prime example of how an internalised M&E approach can ensure both labour market responsiveness and graduate employability. Located in the West Bank, the centre was established in the 1950s. It is one of eight TVET training centres run by UNRWA, equipping young Palestinian refugees with the relevant skills and expertise for Middle Eastern labour markets. The centre has created a Vocational Guidance, Counselling, and Employment Unit to systematically track student progress, employment outcomes, and market linkages. It has developed an employer database, conducts regular labour market surveys, adapts the curricula to labour market needs, facilitates direct employment and provides regional knowledge exchange. The centre is subject to central oversight by the UNWRA.

Each regional employment officer annually updates a database of companies that train or employ graduates, creating a living map of opportunities and training partners. Every two years, the centre carries out a comprehensive survey that not only measures graduate employment rates and gathers employer feedback on skills needs, strengths and gaps in training. Evidence from these surveys and the database is used to revise programmes and specialisations, ensuring they remain responsive to changing labour market demands. This system actively guides students towards in-demand fields and connects them with employers, thereby increasing the likelihood of them finding sustainable employment after graduation. The centre benefits from substantial knowledge and expertise exchange with UNRWA training centres in neighbouring countries, such as Jordan and Lebanon. This enables continuous learning and benchmarking against regional best practices. UNRWA's General Directorate of Education in Jerusalem also monitors the centre directly, overseeing curriculum updates and ensuring alignment with evolving labour market needs.

This structured approach has enabled the centre to build trust with employers, who see their feedback reflected in the curriculum. It has increased graduate employability, as programmes are continuously adjusted to fit real market needs. Employability has reached 100 % in some fields. Regional and institutional collaboration has been strengthened through UNRWA's cross-country training network. This has demonstrated a practical M&E model that other TVET institutions in Palestine could replicate to bridge the gap between training and employment.

TVET institutions that send their students on internships and WBL placements usually do not use digital tracking: *'Yes, we follow up our students, but everything is manual. I don't have support or digital tools for proper monitoring or quality assurance.'* This reliance on manual processes extends to tracking training hours and communicating with employers. Informal and inadequate tracking and monitoring systems are prevalent across TVET institutions. M&E data is often *'unorganised, not systematically saved or classified.'* This hinders the effective assessment and planning of programmes. For WBL, follow-up is often superficial and institutions may simply send *'an official letter stating that the student went for training, without actual follow-up of the training content or verifying its compliance with labour market needs.'* While some institutions attempt to track student progress through methods such as phone calls or field visits to nearby areas, the lack of a unified institutional system for training management and centralised data collection means that these efforts are often siloed and ineffective. One expert noted the need for students to *'document their experience to prove genuine training, suggesting a deep-seated issue of trust and verification in practical training*.'

Thus, training is often provided without *'precise or detailed follow-up'* on content or quality. Many TVET institutions certify students' completion of practical training merely by approving a document,

without verifying whether the trainee has acquired the necessary skills. This practice reflects weak monitoring systems and limited coordination with workplaces, where follow-up on trainees is often minimal or absent. A major underlying issue is the lack of uniform standards across institutions. While some institutions, particularly non-governmental TVET centres, have developed relatively robust monitoring mechanisms, especially where training is delivered as part of donor-funded projects, many centres lack the human resources, technical capacity or standardised procedures to effectively oversee trainees' progress. This problem is particularly evident in apprenticeship programmes and specialised vocational training, where the absence of systematic follow-up undermines the quality of learning outcomes and can result in students lacking the practical competencies demanded by the labour market.

4.2 Responsiveness to labour market needs

TVET programmes are designed to bridge the gap between educational outcomes and labour market needs, ensuring that graduates are employable. This focus has gained increased societal awareness, particularly as many university graduates struggle to find employment, prompting a shift towards acquiring practical skills. To achieve this, an increasing number of institutions are conducting needs assessments and market studies before launching new specialisations, involving employers, unions and the local community. Many TVET centres continuously update their curricula to reflect technological advancements and market requirements. Examples include digital printing, hybrid car maintenance, smart home technologies and AI tools in graphic design. To ensure relevance, private sector representatives and trade unions are often involved in curriculum development and advisory committees. Recognising that technical skills alone are insufficient for success in the modern workplace, many TVET programmes now incorporate '21st-century skills', such as communication, entrepreneurial thinking and emotional intelligence to enhance students' overall employability. There is also a growing emphasis on fostering entrepreneurship and self-employment, with some programmes encouraging students to set up their own e-commerce stores or businesses.

However, the TVET system only partially aligns with the needs of the labour market. Although the MoEHE and MoL have attempted to integrate business needs into curricula and include entrepreneurial, digital and soft skills, the private sector's involvement in shaping and implementing these curricula remains limited (ETF, 2024a: 37). TVET programmes are not sufficiently responsive to the changing demands of the labour market, which leads to a mismatch between the skills students acquire and the competencies employers seek. One of the main obstacles is the high cost of setting up and running training facilities, which discourages private sector investment in TVET (Horemans & Hilal, 2017). As government ministries lack the necessary data for skills anticipation analyses, TVET institutions develop their training programmes based on individual initiatives or 'trendy' specialisations, rather than a realistic picture of labour market demand. As one interviewee emphasised, *'We do not have a clear plan for the future; our decisions are built on our own experience and the limited data that we try to collect using our own resources.'* While TVET providers gather feedback from employers, this information is often fragmented, leading to contradictory signals that make it difficult to accurately identify labour market needs. Employers express varying opinions on skills shortages or market saturation, and many — particularly small or individual companies — lack a systematic approach to defining their skills requirements, often relying on one employee to handle everything from administrative work to technical tasks. Without structured mechanisms to consolidate employer

feedback, strategic planning is weakened, resulting in training programmes that are reactive rather than aligned with long-term national development priorities.

Programme design and curriculum updates are often based on *'individual initiative'* rather than concrete evidence, resulting in graduates who are *'strong in theory but weak in practical skills.'* Emerging fields such as artificial intelligence, hybrid vehicle maintenance and green technologies are particularly difficult to integrate without a national roadmap or consistent funding for modern equipment and trainer upskilling. Some initiatives have focused on strengthening partnerships with chambers of commerce and industry to gather feedback for curriculum development and ensure that programmes remain relevant. Donor organisations have also provided support for 'expert workshops' to aid the process of designing market-responsive curricula.

Despite the systemic challenges, TVET institutions have achieved notable successes in responding to labour market needs. Some TVET centres actively tailor their courses based on local demand and evolving trends to ensure that programmes remain relevant to the labour market. As one interviewee explained, *'We look at market requirements, talk to employers and listen to what is needed to create training programmes for young people.'* This adaptability has resulted in new specialisations being introduced, such as digital printing, hybrid/electric vehicles, smart buildings, sustainable agriculture, e-commerce, and updated hotel management programmes. Other TVET centres collect input from local businesses and employers through direct consultations, questionnaires and meetings with chambers of commerce, using this information to shape their course offerings. In some cases, these partnerships extend beyond internships to actual course co-design and delivery, particularly in the high-tech and medical sectors. A growing number of institutions actively collect feedback from local businesses or use insights from previous training cycles**.** For instance, one centre bases its training agenda on its coordinators collecting information on local labour market needs and academic input. Another continually consults employers and distributes questionnaires to validate course relevance.

4.3 Donor dependency

The TVET sector faces barriers to providing effective practical training, which severely limit students' ability to gain real-world experience and hinder their readiness for the labour market. One of the main barriers is the high cost of equipment, consumables and trainers' fees. Since 2020, the Palestinian government has been suffering from an extreme financial crisis, resulting in frequent salary delays and restraining institutional performance, including that of TVET institutions, in an emergency situation. The situation has rendered many specialised technical programmes financially unsustainable without external funding. *'Emerging fields like AI applications and electric/hybrid car maintenance demand expensive software licences and machines that many institutions cannot afford without donor support.'*

Many TVET centres depend heavily on donor funding for modern equipment and infrastructure. This creates a risk of unsustainability if funding ceases or shifts, as seen with some donor programmes being redirected to emergency humanitarian aid following recent conflicts. According to one interviewee, *'[t]he over-reliance on international funding to secure infrastructure and cover trainer expenses poses a significant risk.'*

Donors play a critical and often indispensable role in improving the equipment and facilities of TVET institutions. Many sophisticated pieces of equipment, such as digital printing machines, CNC machines, and specialised tools for fields like electric and hybrid cars, have been provided through external projects, with funding often coming from entities like the World Bank, USAID or Canadian projects. This support enables institutions to offer modern, market-relevant specialisations that would otherwise be beyond their financial reach, given that the cost of such large-scale equipment is 'very high.' Without these 'supporters or funders,' it is often deemed 'very difficult to provide such capabilities, especially large equipment,' and to open certain specialisations.

- Curriculum development and modernisation – Donors have supported both the development and subsequent updates of curricula that are well aligned with labour market demands and technological advancements. They have also backed the development and update of a skills forecasting model to bridge the gap between labour market supply and demand, although obtaining precise data remains a challenge. Donors have also funded the integration of 21st century skills, for example soft skills, entrepreneurship and green skills, into trainer development programmes, and manuals have been developed to mainstream these across disciplines. New specialisations, such as renewable energy diplomas, have been launched based on market studies, which are often funded by international partners.
- Financial aid and incentives for students – Grants and scholarships are provided to students, particularly girls and those from marginalised families, to cover tuition fees, travel costs and living expenses. These costs can be significant barriers to access. In some cases, full scholarships for women entering traditionally male-dominated fields such as car maintenance and carpentry have led to increased female enrolment.
- Capacity building and institutional support – Some donors fund training programmes for trainers, particularly in emerging fields such as media literacy and AI. The aim is to create a pool of competent coaches. Operational manuals and standardised templates for WBL follow-up, developed with donor support, aim to improve programme quality and monitoring. Donors have also established private sector innovation hubs in **s**ectors such as technology and fashion design to provide skills development, self-employment incubation, and coaching.

Donors have played a key role in establishing and expanding WBL within Palestine's TVET system. Without their direct involvement, many WBL initiatives would not exist. This support has also been crucial in encouraging private-sector engagement. Donors often provide grants and direct payments to students enrolled in WBL programmes, which is especially important during periods of economic hardship. This support can cover living expenses or a portion of the training costs, enabling students, particularly those from low-income families, to enrol. For example, in some programmes *'salaries are paid to the students by the programme,'* which becomes *'a priority in the case of war.'* This support ensures that students can continue their training despite financial strains in their families.

Many vocational training centres remain donor-dependent for securing equipment, facilities and launching new programmes, which in many cases are primarily shaped by the donor's vision rather than a coherent national framework. This results in weak vocational training outcomes and limits the system's ability to address the rising unemployment rates, particularly among young people and women. Insufficient government funding means that TVET institutions have to rely heavily on external donor projects to cover infrastructure, equipment and operational costs. When this funding ceases or

shifts, programmes may be halted or lack essential resources, which impacts long-term sustainability. This also affects the private sector's willingness to host trainees without financial incentives. For example, one TVET centres states: *'We obtained a modern CNC machine through a Canadian project grant, which would have been very difficult to acquire otherwise.'*

Most TVET centres in Palestine, including those run by NGOs, universities, industrial schools and the Ministry of Labour, remain heavily dependent on international donor funding for the purchase equipment and the establishment of laboratories, particularly for modern and technology-oriented specialisations. The introduction of new programmes that respond to labour market needs often depends on the availability of external financial support to set up the necessary infrastructure.

This pervasive reliance on donor funding raises serious concerns about long-term sustainability. When external resources are delayed or withdrawn, programmes risk becoming outdated, being suspended or never being implemented at all. As one TVET centres notes, *'Up to 98 % of equipment comes from donor projects*,*'* illustrating the extent to which the system lacks self-sufficiency. A clear example of this vulnerability occurred in early 2025 when USAID withdrew its support, leading to the suspension of several training initiatives and leaving institutions unable to maintain or update essential programmes. Over time, this dependency undermines the institutional capacity to plan strategically, maintain consistent quality and ensure that training programmes remain aligned with evolving labour market demands.

4.4 Professional capacity and training gaps

The quality and availability of trainers is a critical aspect of effective training provision. Many sources highlight a severe shortage of qualified instructors, particularly in modern technical fields or areas requiring extensive practical experience. The issue is compounded by uncompetitive government salaries for vocational trainers, which are often significantly lower than the earnings of skilled professionals in the private sector. This makes it difficult to attract and retain top talent. Consequently, some institutions resort to employing university graduates who may lack practical experience or hiring individuals for administrative reasons rather than their technical competence, which has a direct impact on the quality of training. To counter this, some centres adopt strategies such as recruiting trainers who are actively working in the labour market or even developing specialised 'coach training' courses to enhance pedagogical and technical skills. Regular staff development and upskilling programmes for existing trainers are also recognised as essential, particularly for adapting to rapid technological change.

Recruiting and retaining qualified trainers is a major challenge due to low government salaries being much lower than in the private sector, which makes it *'nearly impossible to attract skilled professionals.'* The severe shortage of qualified trainers, exacerbated by low salaries and limited professional development opportunities, undermines the practical nature of training, even when modern equipment is available. Furthermore, a heavy reliance on donor funding for equipment and facilities raises concerns about long-term sustainability, as quality initiatives often collapse once external projects end. Some trainers lack the necessary technical and pedagogical qualifications, and some simply learn the material as they teach it. This leads to a reliance on personal networks for trainer recruitment, as there is no national registry. In the absence of unified standards, programme quality varies widely.

This gap is further compounded by the limited opportunities for continuous training among instructors, preventing them from keeping pace with modern advancements. Consequently, even when new programmes are introduced, graduates often have a *strong from the theoretical foundation but lack practical skills*. Some employers report that such graduates *'require an additional three to six months of postgraduate training before they are truly job-ready,'* highlighting the persistent disconnect between what is taught in training centres and what the labour market demands.

A frequent bottleneck is the limited availability of professional trainers with up-to-date market expertise. *'Recruiting qualified trainers is difficult due to high costs, with offers of NIS 200 per hour for AI courses*.' Low incentives and uncompetitive salaries in the public sector led to high staff turnover, resulting in the cancellation of many programmes due to an inability to find suitable staff. Many instructors in the private and continuous education centres are academically qualified, but 'lack applied technical experience.'

However, the TVET sector excels in the professional qualifications of its instructors, with many teachers and trainers across public institutions, NGOs, and the private sector holding university degrees, vocational diplomas, or accredited certificates and training. International indicators highlight improvements in access to initial TVET opportunities for progression to higher education, and structured learner pathways. These contribute to a more goal-oriented environment for teaching and learning and indirectly support professional growth for trainers (ETF, 2024c, p. 16).

Despite these positive developments, the sector continues to face systemic challenges regarding its professional capacity and the quality of training. A shortage of trainers in emerging and specialised fields, such as artificial intelligence, digital marketing and certain technical trades, has created a gap between teaching content and evolving market needs. In some cases, instructors are required to teach subjects outside their core area of expertise, and the public sector's inability to offer competitive salaries makes it difficult to attract and retain professionals from the private sector. Limited career progression pathways, dependence on donor-funded positions, and constrained opportunities for continuous professional development also affect capacity-building efforts. Although training-of-trainers programmes, in-house capacity-building initiatives and external expert engagement are in place, their long-term sustainability is a concern, given the proposed dissolution of the NTC in 2024, which reduced coordination and strategic alignment across the sector.

Several interviewees have suggested that inconsistent standards and a shortage of qualified trainers also have a negative impact on the quality of training. Some trainers lack practical experience or the necessary technical skills. Monitoring and evaluation processes are also inconsistent, with data frequently disorganised, making it difficult to ensure programme quality and track outcomes effectively.

Qualifying and retaining trainers remains one of the most pressing challenges for the TVET system. There is a severe shortage of qualified instructors, particularly in advanced and modern fields. Government vocational schools often struggle to attract experienced professionals because their salaries are far less competitive than those in the private sector. While many instructors hold academic degrees, they often lack the practical expertise required for high-quality, hands-on training. As one stakeholder put it, *'The same teachers who taught traditional marketing, not digital marketing, teach the new specialisations,'* illustrating a clear competence gap. This disconnect between theoretical instruction and industry needs is compounded by the fact that new equipment, often

acquired through donor funding, remains underutilised because due to a shortage of qualified trainers who can operate it. Even when modern equipment is available, it is often underutilised, since *'we might have the equipment, but we do not have trainers and educators with the necessary skills to use it.'*

Many TVET institutions suffer from critical gaps in professional capacity, particularly a lack of qualified and adequately compensated trainers. This deficiency directly impacts the quality and relevance of training programmes, undermining the sector's ability to meet labour market needs. TVET institutions struggle to find and retain experienced trainers who can deliver high-quality practical instruction, particularly in specialised or emerging fields such as AI applications, hybrid vehicle diagnostics, advanced refrigeration systems, digital media and cybersecurity. Some programmes have even been cancelled entirely due to an inability to find or retain suitable staff. An increasing number of skilled trainers have moved to better-paid jobs outside vocational institutions.

A major contributing factor is the low salaries offered to trainers in government institutions compared to those in the private sector. According to one interviewee, *A skilled chef might earn NIS 8 000 shekels in the private sector, but the MoL and many private and NGOs TVET centres cannot afford such salaries*.' This financial imbalance makes it difficult to attract and incentivise skilled professionals. High staff turnover and low incentives also discourage long-term commitment from qualified trainers, with many staying for only one course cycle due to inadequate payment structures.

Many current trainers, particularly those from academic backgrounds or administrative roles, lack the necessary technical skills and practical experience. One noted that ***'****many of our trainers come from academia; they're excellent teachers, but they don't always have hands-on field experience****.'*** Furthermore, there is no national or sectoral pool of certified trainers, nor a clear framework for trainer licensing, evaluation, or continuous professional development (CPD). Instructor training is often outdated, with many instructors teaching content that no longer reflects industry needs. While institutions frequently pay for their trainers to attend upskilling courses, but there is no national support for this.

There is also a limited availability of trainers with up-to-date market expertise and practical experience. *'Low government salaries, often ranging from NIS 2 500 to 3 000, are significantly less competitive than private sector wages (NIS 6 000–7 000), making it difficult to attract and retain talent'*. This results in a reliance on instructors who are academically qualified but lack practical experience, or those who are underqualified, which has a direct impact on the practical orientation and market relevance of training.

5. Impact of the ongoing conflict in Palestine

The ongoing occupation and conflict in Palestine have had a profound impact on socioeconomic well-being, leading to widespread destruction and significant setbacks in various sectors, including the economy and education. Since 7 October 2023, the escalation of the long-running conflict has devastated Gaza and increasingly disrupted daily life in the West Bank, due to large-scale military operations, settler violence and the destruction of Palestinian property including schools. Movement has also been severely restricted.

The economy has been severely affected, leading to business closures, reduced activity and increased unemployment. This has reduced opportunities for WBL for TVET students. Many businesses, particularly those in the tourism sector in areas such as Beit Bethlehem, have been severely affected, with some unable to operate as usual or even forced to close entirely. A significant proportion of businesses rely on the Israeli market. Many of these businesses have gone bankrupt, and unemployment in these companies has risen sharply. This has resulted in a huge financial crisis, reducing family incomes and increasing the financial burden on students, many of whom are struggling to afford transport or tuition fees.

The conflict has also had a profound social and psychological impact. Students and their families experience heightened fear and anxiety due to security incidents and movement restrictions. This can lead to a sense of psychological instability, making it difficult for individuals to focus on their studies or plan their career development in the long term. The economic strain often forces young people to prioritise finding work immediately over continuing their education. Additionally, gender-related challenges persist, with safety concerns and transportation costs potentially deterring girls from enrolling in certain vocational programmes, despite policies aimed at ensuring equal access.

5.1 Impact of conflict in the West Bank

In the West Bank, the illegal Israeli occupation has resulted in the closure and damage to many schools over the last few decades. Since 2010, the Israeli authorities have demolished around 30 schools. The situation has recently worsened, with some 84 schools serving over 12 000 students across the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, being issued with demolition orders issued by Israeli authorities by June 2025 (OPT Education Cluster, 2025b). Recent escalations have greatly hindered access to education and TVET services (World Bank, EU, UN, 2025: 68). By September 2024, nearly 782 000 children in the West Bank were at risk of missing the school year due to military operations and settler violence. With 58 schools facing demolition orders and daily closures reaching 20 %, many students were forced to miss classes. Violent incidents resulted in 67 student deaths and 367 injuries (ESCWA & UNDP, 2024). Rising poverty has led 29 % of households to reduce spending on education spending, with 7 % being forced to rely on child labour. Children with disabilities and girls are at a higher risk of dropping out due to financial pressures and harmful coping mechanisms, such as early marriage, while teachers have gone unpaid for more than six months (ESCWA & UNDP, 2024; OPT Education Cluster, 2024).

Significant disruptions have been experienced in the education and training sector, particularly with regard to student access and practical training. Barriers, checkpoints, and road closures have made it

difficult and sometimes dangerous for students to reach training centres and colleges. This has led to concerns about their safety from parents. This has contributed to student dropouts. Practical training and WBL have also been severely impacted, as many workshops and businesses, especially in affected areas such as the northern West Bank, are operating at reduced capacity or have closed. This makes it exceedingly difficult to secure genuine training opportunities for students.

Reduced opportunities and a shift in demand in the labour market have led to a drastic decrease in job availability for graduates. The scarcity of opportunities, coupled with an increase in graduates, intensifies competition for available jobs. Existing training centres also struggle with outdated equipment and an inability to acquire modern tools due to insufficient local funding. This hinders their capacity to provide innovative training that aligns with current market demands.

5.2 Impact of conflict in Gaza

In Gaza, 17 years of blockade and repeated Israeli military bombardment of the civilian infrastructure intended to render normal life unliveable for the population have virtually destroyed the entire education system, leaving it in urgent need of restoration (OCHA, 2022). Since the start of the current phase of the conflict in October 2023, almost all regular education and TVET activities have ceased. The conflict has damaged all educational facilities in Gaza, leaving over 658 000 schoolchildren and 87 000 tertiary students without access to formal learning environments. Many children are not in education are now engaged in child labour, further exacerbating the educational crisis.

The extraordinary level of destruction has affected schools, TVET centres, training facilities and universities (World Bank, EU, UN, 2025, pp. 27–33). It has also resulted in the loss of lives among TVET staff members, further exacerbating the crisis (EU, 2024: 69). According to OCHA's Reported impact snapshot, as of August 2025 Israeli attacks had killed more than 15 811 students and 703 members of educational staff and injured more than 23 612 students and 3 015 teachers.[7] Almost 90% of schools (501 out of 564) will require full reconstruction or major rehabilitation in order to become functional again. More than 60 university buildings have been destroyed. In total, more than 2 308 educational facilities, ranging from kindergartens to universities, have been destroyed. In response, more than 500 temporary learning spaces (TLS) were established across the Gaza Strip with donor assistance in 2024 (OPT, 2025a). These operate on a three-day rotation and shift model, with each shift averaging 2.5 hours.

Despite the efforts of UNRWA and the Palestinian Ministry of Education to safeguard education, the extensive damage to infrastructure, particularly university facilities, makes it improbable that education can be reinstated without an immediate ceasefire and an end to the occupation (Faculty of Education, University of Cambridge, Centre for Lebanese Studies & UNRWA, 2024). Even with an immediate ceasefire, the prospects of restoring TVET facilities and educational programmes will be daunting and require substantial external support, including from EU aid programmes.

[7] https://www.ochaopt.org/content/reported-impact-snapshot-gaza-strip-27-august-2025

6 Conclusions and policy recommendations

This report provides an overview of the TVET landscape in Palestine. It focuses on the policy and institutional framework, the challenges of access, and the measures taken to ensure quality and relevance of the educational and training provision provided at all levels. Palestine has implemented various policy reforms to promote technical and vocational education and training for young people and adults. In this section, we set out our recommendations for further improving the TVET system, recognising that the current conditions are challenging and that not all recommendations will be feasible to implement in the near future.

6.1 The organisation of IVET and CVET

The organisation of TVET in Palestine, which encompasses both IVET and CVET, faces significant systemic challenges that hinder its coherence, effectiveness and responsiveness to labour market needs. Policies should address these structural weaknesses to foster a more integrated, responsive, and high-quality TVET system.

6.2 TVET system management

The management of the TVET system in Palestine, including the institutional and policy frameworks, needs systemic reforms to address governance, institutional coordination, data collection and utilisation, quality assurance, and human resource development. The overall quality of system management has declined, emphasising the urgent need for policy improvements.

Reinforce unified governance and strategic planning

- Empowering a unified, central national authority responsible for TVET governance: A strong central body is essential for providing a national roadmap, ensuring long-term sustainability, and overcoming the perception of a governance void.
- Clarify and streamline institutional responsibilities: Address overlapping mandates and inconsistent policy implementation among the NTC, MoEHE, MoL, MoSD, UNRWA, civil society organisations and independent private providers will foster a cohesive system.

Strengthen labour market information and data-driven decision-making

- Develop and implement a robust national LMIS: The current system is characterised by inconsistent data collection, fragmented information across various ministries and a lack of detailed micro-level data for accurate skills anticipation. A unified LMIS is critical for evidence-based policymaking, demand-driven programme development, and reliable skill forecasting.
- Develop and implement functional digital evaluation and certification systems to systematically track student progress, training outcomes, and graduate employability, moving away from manual and irregular methods.

Improve the policy framework for TVET

- Enhance political will and commitment: Address the perceived lack of sincere political will that has historically hindered coordination efforts and the sustained functioning of central TVET bodies.
- Develop and regularly update a unified national TVET strategy: The last comprehensive strategy dates back to 2010, and subsequent references within broader frameworks remain fragmented. A new, overarching strategy is crucial to aligning TVET with national development priorities and the evolving needs of the Palestinian labour market, moving beyond donor-driven or trend-based programme development.
- Integrate contingency planning: Develop and integrate contingency planning and support mechanisms into TVET policies to ensure system resilience and continuity during periods of conflict and instability. This includes supporting flexible delivery models, such as hybrid and online learning for theoretical components, and localised training options where physical access is restricted.

Develop and implement the NQF

- Fully implement the NQF: Utilise the NQF to provide a national map of qualifications that is making them more transparent, comparable, and consistent in describing and referencing qualifications across different sectors.
- Use the NQF it to clarify learning pathways, formally recognise prior learning and facilitate vertical mobility between TVET and higher education, reducing reliance on the Tawjihi exam for TVET graduates.
- Establish mechanisms for the formal recognition of non-formal and informal learning: Address the lack of formal recognition for skills gained outside traditional pathways, which currently reduces their visibility and credibility in the labour market, limiting progression.

Develop a quality assurance framework based on the NQF

- Establish a national TVET quality assurance authority and a unified M&E framework for TVET programmes, focusing on outcomes, employer satisfaction, and continuous improvement.
- Implement robust licensing and accreditation processes: Control the uncontrolled expansion and proliferation of unlicensed providers, particularly in the private sector, and ensure consistent quality standards beyond basic physical standards. Licensing and registration processes should include mechanisms for controlling programme content and curriculum quality after initial approval.
- Develop unified standards, curricula, and competency assessments: Unify terminology and content and address the lack of standardisation in programme design, hours and accreditation requirements across institutions. This will ensure the consistency and credibility of qualifications.
- Promote flexible learning opportunities: Encourage the development and formal recognition of flexible learning models, such as short courses, hybrid models and evening classes, to cater for adults, job seekers and individuals looking to upgrade their skills, ensuring that these pathways lead to career progression.

- Develop and implement functional digital evaluation and monitoring systems for systematic tracking of student progress, training outcomes and graduate employability, moving away from manual and irregular methods.

Enhance private sector engagement

- Establish a robust national framework for structured WBL and apprenticeships, ensuring formal accreditation, clear learning outcomes, and close coordination with the private sector to bridge the gap between the classroom and the workplace. This framework should clearly define the roles, responsibilities and benefits for both trainees and employers.
- Provide financial incentives to the private sector for WBL: Implement sustainable mechanisms like wage subsidies, tax exemptions, cost-sharing schemes, and performance-based grants to encourage private sector engagement in work-based learning and training. Address the perception of hosting trainees as a 'financial burden.'
- Promote resource sharing and specialised labs: Encourage structured partnerships for shared laboratories and equipment between TVET institutions and with industry to optimise resource utilisation and provide students with exposure to diverse tools and technologies.
- Strengthen institutional partnerships with private sector companies and chambers of commerce to co-design curricula, arrange training placements and create post-training employment opportunities.
- Support small and micro-enterprises in building their capacity to host trainees and articulate their skills needs, in recognition of their significant presence in the Palestinian economy.

6.3 Barriers in access to TVET

To enhance access to learning within the TVET system in Palestine, particularly by addressing socioeconomic and economic barriers, several key policy recommendations are crucial:

Ease financial constraints

- Increase government budget allocations for TVET. Significantly increase core government funding for TVET institutions based on long-term funding strategies to cover operational costs, procure modern equipment, secure raw materials, ensure adequate maintenance and reduce the heavy, and reduce reliance on unsustainable external donor funding.
- Diversify funding sources and explore innovative financing mechanisms, such as cost-sharing with industry or local endowments, to ensure the long-term sustainability of TVET programmes.
- Implement comprehensive student aid programmes. Prioritise establishing and expanding grants and scholarships for students, particularly those from disadvantaged economic backgrounds, rural areas, and vulnerable groups such as women and persons with disabilities. These programmes should aim to cover tuition fees, transport costs and living expenses, as these are significant barriers to access. Particular attention should be given to providing grants for girls undertaking professional training, especially during economic crises, to mitigate financial hardship and encourage participation.

- Formalise flexible payment plans: Implement and expand policies for flexible payment plans, instalment options and fee waivers for vulnerable groups to alleviate the immediate financial burden of programme costs.

Invest more in educational resources and equipment

- Invest in modern equipment and facilities: Prioritise significant government and donor investment in the acquisition of state-of-the-art equipment, software licences, and raw materials for high-demand specialisations (e.g. AI, hybrid vehicles and renewable energy).
- Provide funding for personal equipment. Explore mechanisms to help students acquire the necessary personal equipment (e.g. computers), which is increasingly vital for developing digital skills in modern TVET programmes.

Address barriers to work-based learning opportunities

- Establish a robust national framework for WBL**.** Develop and implement a standardised national framework for WBL and apprenticeships to ensure meaningful and structured practical training opportunities. This framework should include clear roles and responsibilities for both trainees and employers, as well as clear benefits.
- Provide capacity building for small businesses. Support small and micro-enterprises, especially in rural areas, to develop the necessary infrastructure, advanced equipment and qualified mentors to effectively host trainees.

Reduce dropout rates and increase retention

- Implement robust early career guidance. From an early stage, policy should integrate structured career guidance and counselling into general education. This guidance must provide students with accurate labour market information, skill forecasting data, and personalised aptitude assessments, enabling them to make informed choices about their specialisation, free from gender stereotypes or peer pressure.

Address territorial and mobility barriers to access

- Subsidise transportation and promote local training. Develop policies that offer subsidised transport or support the creation of localised training initiatives closer to students' homes. This is critical in reducing the significantly increased transport costs and overcoming mobility barriers caused by checkpoints and security measures, which disproportionately affect women and students with disabilities.

Support students with disabilities

- Increase government budget allocations. This is necessary to cover operational costs, procure modern equipment, and secure raw materials, all of which are particularly crucial for meeting the specialised needs of PwD in training.
- Implement comprehensive student aid programmes and formalise flexible payment plans. This includes grants and scholarships for PwD to cover tuition fees, transport costs and living expenses;

instalment options; and fee waivers to alleviate the immediate financial burden for vulnerable groups, including PwD.

- Prioritise significant government and donor investment in acquiring state-of-the-art and specialised equipment, software licenses and raw materials required for PwD, as current resource limitations mean that many specialised technical programmes are cost prohibitive.
- Subsidise transport and promote local training initiatives closer to students' homes. This is critical to overcoming significantly increased transport costs and mobility barriers (e.g. checkpoints, security measures) that disproportionately affect students with disabilities, often leading to reduced attendance or dropouts when specialised transport is unavailable.
- Attract and retain qualified trainers who are capable of working with PwD, as vocational rehabilitation requires trained professionals who are currently in short supply.
- Provide financial incentives to the private sector for WBL. Mechanisms such as wage subsidies and tax exemptions are needed for this. This is crucial to overcoming employers' hesitation to accept PwD due to fear, stigma or misconceptions about productivity and safety. These factors currently lead to scarce practical training and job opportunities.

Gender disparities

- Launch awareness campaigns. Develop and fund comprehensive public awareness campaigns that challenge the persistent societal stigma against vocational education. These campaigns should highlight the prestige, diverse career opportunities and direct pathways to employment and self-employment that TVET offers, highlighting successful graduates.
- Promote non-traditional fields for women. Actively encourage and support female participation in traditionally male-dominated technical fields by offering targeted scholarships and awareness programmes and providing gender-sensitive facilities and training environments.

6.4 The quality and relevance of TVET

To enhance the quality and relevance of TVET in Palestine, several policy recommendations have been suggested to address issues such as systemic fragmentation, limited resources, and a lack of connection to labour market needs. These recommendations are derived from identifying key challenges and successful isolated initiatives within the TVET system.

Strengthen monitoring and follow-up by TVET providers

- Standardise data collection, tracking and evaluation. Move away from manual, informal and unorganised data management practices. Implement functional digital evaluation and certification systems to systematically track student progress, training outcomes and graduate employability.
- Institutionalise systematic employer feedback mechanisms. Establish structured mechanisms for gathering, consolidating, and integrating employer feedback on skill demands and training quality into curriculum development and programme adjustments.

- Formalise and track WBL outcomes**.** Policy should mandate the implementation of national mechanisms for assessing the quality and consistency of practical training components, as well as systematically tracking graduate employability and employer satisfaction with WBL programmes.
- Strengthen systematic follow-up mechanisms for WBL and graduates, including employer satisfaction surveys and impact assessments, to create crucial feedback loops for programme adjustment and accountability. (5.2)

Improve responsiveness to labour market needs

- Ensure that curricula are updated continuously and in a timely manner to integrate modern technologies (e.g. AI, digital marketing, smart homes, renewable energy, hybrid/electric vehicles), green skills and essential 21st-century skills (communication, entrepreneurship, adaptability and digital literacy).
- Promote competency-based approaches (CBAs) with a strong emphasis on practical, hands-on training and real-world production experience to ensure that graduates are ready for the job market from day one.
- Develop flexible programme design and accreditation processes that allow for quick adjustments to existing programmes in order to align them with dynamic market needs.

Reduce donor dependency

- Develop sustainable national funding mechanisms for TVET: Reduce over-reliance on external donor funding for equipment, infrastructure and operational costs, ensuring long-term stability and strategic planning and making the system more self-sufficient.

Increase professional capacity and reduce training gaps

- Invest in modern equipment and facilities. Prioritise significant government and donor investment for the acquisition of state-of-the-art equipment, software licences and raw materials for high-demand specialisations (e.g. AI, hybrid vehicles and renewable energy).
- Attract and retain qualified trainers. Implement policies for competitive compensation, structured professional development, and a clear national framework for trainer licensing and evaluation. This is crucial to attracting and retaining skilled professionals from the private sector, ensuring that trainers possess up-to-date market expertise and practical experience, particularly in emerging technical fields.
- Implement a national framework for trainer qualifications, licensing, and continuous professional development (CPD), including specialised training in emerging fields and pedagogical skills, in order to address the shortage of qualified instructors.
- Revise public sector salary frameworks for TVET trainers to ensure competitiveness with the private sector, thereby attracting and retaining skilled practitioners with current market expertise.
- Encourage and facilitate the recruitment and engagement of industry practitioners as trainers, through flexible employment models (e.g. part-time and guest lecturers) and allow public sector trainers to undertake private sector work to maintain their skills.

- Provide dedicated national support for trainer upskilling to ensure that instructors remain current with technological advancements and industry needs.

6.5 Response to the impact of the ongoing conflict in Palestine

- Prioritise restoration of damaged facilities**:** Advocate for and prioritise international aid and government funding for the restoration of damaged educational and TVET facilities in conflict-affected areas, such as Gaza, to re-establish access to formal learning environments.
- Develop and institutionalise contingency and adaptive delivery plans (e.g. blended/online learning, decentralised training in local communities) to ensure continuity of TVET during periods of conflict, mobility restrictions and crises.
- Prioritise funding for reconstruction and modernisation of TVET facilities in conflict-affected areas, including provision of essential equipment and resources, especially in the West Bank and Gaza.
- Provide comprehensive financial, logistical and psychosocial support to students and staff affected by conflict, addressing transportation costs, tuition fees and mental well-being to prevent dropout and ensure access.
- Develop specific, conflict-sensitive incentives and support mechanisms for the private sector to encourage its participation in WBL, especially when businesses are operating at reduced capacities or facing closures.

ACRONYMS

AI	Artificial intelligence
CBA	Competency-based approach
CNC	Computer numerical control
COVID	Coronavirus disease
CPD	Continuous professional development
CVET	Continuing vocational education and training
HCTVET	Higher Council for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
ISCED	International standard classification of education
IVET	Initial vocational education and training
LET	Local employment and TVET
LLL	Lifelong learning
LMIS	Labour market information system
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MoEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
MoL	Ministry of Labour
MoSD	Ministry of Social Development
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NQF	National qualification framework
NTC	National TVET Commission
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OPT	Occupied Palestinian territories

PALTEL	Palestinian Telecommunication Company
PCBS	Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics
PFI	Palestinian Federation of Industries
PLC	Palestinian Legislative Council
PMO	Prime Minister's office
POC	Palestinian occupational classification
PwD	Persons with disabilities
TLS	Temporary learning spaces
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training

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APPENDIX

INSTITUTIONS VISITED	Type of Respondent
Albir Society	Non-Governmental Vocational Training Centre
Alia Qunni	TVET Female Graduate
An-Najah University	Non-Governmental Continuing Education Centre
Bethlehem University	Non-Governmental Continuing Education Centre
Dar Al-Kalima University	Private Technical University
Deir Dibwan Secondary Industrial School	MoEHE Vocational School
Education for Employment (EFE)	International NGOs- TVET Donor
Enabel	International NGOs- TVET Donor
Evangelical Lutheran School	MoEHE Vocational School
Federation of Palestinian Chambers of Commerce, Industry and Agriculture (FPCCIA)	Federation
Galaxy Training Centre	Private Vocational Training Centre
GIZ	International NGOs- TVET Donor
Hisham Hijjawi College of Technology	Non-Governmental Technical College
Inash Alusra Association	Non-Governmental Technical College
Industrial Islamic Orphans School at Al-Eizariya	MoEHE Vocational School
Kalandia training centre	UNRWA Vocational Training Centre
Lutheran World Federation (Ramallah and Jerusalem)	Non-Governmental Vocational Training Program
Minaret Company	Private Company trains TVET Students
Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MoEHE)	General Directorate of Technical Education
Ministry of Labour (MoL)	General Directorate of Vocational Training
Ministry of Social Development (MoSD)	General Directorate of Social Care and Rehabilitation
MoL Vocational Training Centre – Al-Eizariya	MoL Vocational Training Centre
MoL Vocational Training Centre – Hebron	MoL Vocational Training Centre
MoL Vocational Training Centre – Jenin	MoL Vocational Training Centre
MoL Vocational Training Centre – Nablus	MoL Vocational Training Centre
Nablus Industrial Secondary School	MoEHE Vocational School

Nablus University for Vocational and Technical Education	MoEHE Technical University
Palestine Polytechnic University	Non-Governmental Technical University, Continuous Education Centre
Palestine Technical College/Arroub	MoEHE Technical College
Palestine Technical University - Kadoorie	MoEHE Technical University, Continuous Education Centre
Palestinian Employment Fund (PEF)	Governmental Body
Palestinian Federation of Industries (PFI)	Federation
Quds Open University – Continuing Education Centre	Non-Governmental Continuing Education Centre
Ramallah Women's Community College	UNRWA Community College
Razan Academy Training Centre	Private Vocational Training Centre
Sheikh Khalifa Bin Zayed Vocational Rehabilitation Center – Nablus	MOSD Vocational Training Centre for PwD
Silat adh-Dhahr Secondary Industrial School	MoEHE Vocational School
Smart College	Private Technical College
Talitha Kumi Community College	Non-Governmental Technical College
UNESCO	International NGOs-TVET Donor
Yaish Company	Private Company trains TVET Students
YMCA Vocational Training Centre – Jericho	Non-Governmental Vocational Training Centre
YWCA – Ramallah	Non-Governmental Vocational Training Centre