

MAPPING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING GOVERNANCE IN LEBANON



GEMM
GOVERNANCE FOR
EMPLOYABILITY IN THE
MEDITERRANEAN



This report (unedited version) was prepared by Tom Leney on the basis of data collected by Ahmad Smaili, following the methodology of the ETF GEMM project on governance, financing, and quality assurance in vocational training. The process was coordinated by the ETF.

The project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This working document reflects the views of the author only. The Commission, the ETF or any other EU institutions, cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

@ European Training Foundation, 2014
Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.



MAPPING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING GOVERNANCE IN LEBANON



Contents

Executive summary	3
Introduction	5
1. Mapping vocational and technical education governance – key points.....	7
1.1 Mapping of the VTE system management	7
1.2 Finance and funding	8
1.3 Quality assurance	9
2. Analysis.....	11
2.1 Self-evaluation of VTE governance in Lebanon	11
2.2 VTE leadership at national level	12
2.3 Social dialogue and partnership	13
2.4 Territorial dimension	14
2.5 Increasing responsiveness, autonomy and accountability of VTE providers	15
2.6 Improving the evidence-based policy approach to steering VTE policy making in multi-participatory environments.....	16
2.7 Summary: GEMM National Committee’s evaluation of strengths and weaknesses	16
Recommendations	18
Annex 1: Structure of the VTE system	20
Acronyms.....	21

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The mapping and peer review of governance of vocational and technical education (VTE)¹ in Lebanon was conducted by ETF's local expert working with the GEMM National Committee, and the final report was prepared for ETF by an international expert. The issues governance issues investigated are management of the system, finance and quality assurance.

Lebanon ranks highly on the overall quality of its educational systems (10th among 144 countries in the recent World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report), but poorly in terms of the extent of staff training and on the capacity for innovation. Technical and vocational education and training is not highly regarded. Labour market features include high levels level of unemployment among young people, low rates of female participation in economic life, the large size of the informal sector, the influx of foreign workers and refugees from Palestine, Syria, etc., and the large number of skilled Lebanese people obtaining employment abroad.

The technical and vocational education and training system is the responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), and is managed by the Directorate General of Vocational and Technical Education (DGVTE). The DGVTE manages 227 private and 108 public institutes, schools and training centres covering initial VTE. 27 schools implement the dual system approach supported by the GIZ. There are also 29 schools managed under the Joint Programme, a collaborative arrangement between private and public entities. The DGVTE does not cover continuing training, which is low in terms of priorities in public policy and expenditure. There is an extensive private sector of schools and universities.

Public VTE governance is centralised. The Ministry initiates policies, has a role in major decision-making and acts as the main financier for public VTE system from Government revenue, and the minister is a strategic actor. The Directorate General of VTE also initiates policy and is a key strategic player, making decisions, funding the public providers and is responsible for assessment and quality control. Although both the ministry and the DGVTE have a policy role with a legal basis, subsequent decrees and legislative acts have complicated the delineation of roles between the ministry and the DGVTE.

Two other bodies have a legally defined role in the management of VTE: the Higher Council for VTE and the Centre for Education Research and Development (CERD). The Higher Council for VTE was established by government decree to operate as an advisory body to the DGVTE; despite broad agreement on its role and mission, the Council has never been activated and has never met. CERD is intended to have an applied research and development role. CERD is operational in the field of general education, but has been given little if any effective role to play in supporting VTE policy and implementation.

Employers and their organisations are largely absent as key partners in VTE governance and management and human resources development in general. In the public sector of initial training, some initiatives involving employers are to be found such as in the dual system development led by GIZ, the EU-led agro-food training initiative and in the DGVTE-funded special projects. Although limited in terms of numbers and scope, these initiatives have engaged with new approaches to industry-supported ways of identifying training needs, more innovative curricula and cooperation with employers. The trades unions hardly feature as stakeholders.

¹ The acronym VTE (vocational and technical education) will be used throughout the text as this is the current denomination used in Lebanon.

In 2010 the government approved a National Education Strategy Framework and a related Education Sector Development Plan (for general education) 2010–15, which includes the vision of the MEHE, and more detailed strategy, policy and development objectives. VTE was not included in this wider strategy, but a Strategic Multi-annual Action Plan for VTE reform was developed and approved in 2011 with a view to the review and modernisation of the VTE system. In spite of numerous frustrations, some progress has been made and an immediate task is to identify how the range of reforms needed to make the VTE system more effective can be identified, and then made operational. Reviewing and modernising the structure and administration of VTE and strengthening the partnership and cooperating with social partners and other stakeholders are among the key priorities of the Action Plan. To date, reforms have been piecemeal and often are not carried through, and no one has yet made a determined attempt to initiate widespread, thorough, incremental and lasting reforms.

Until now governance has been centralised almost entirely in the hands of the Ministry and of DGVTE, yet this has not proved effective in establishing and implementing modernising reforms. Furthermore, the vicissitudes experienced in Lebanon have left governance quite fragile, so that it has proved difficult to maintain consistency of reform. Collaboration between the representatives of employers and the public agencies and training providers can lead to a better intelligence on labour market skills trends and needs, a more active role in developing and implementing strategies for skilling learners appropriately, a more thorough engagement of employers in providing aspects of training. Developing and maintaining a national qualifications framework can be a useful forum for bringing stakeholders together in a formal and purposeful way. As yet, collaboration with social partners has happened only to a very limited extent, although there are some ‘green shoots’ of growth.

Unlike the private training providers, public training providers (representing around 40% of the overall training offer) have little, if any, autonomy to take local management decisions and depend totally on management of the DGVTE.

The principle source of finance for public VTE administered by the DGVTE is the general public budget. The current budgeting framework has no provision to encourage employers to support VTE, and no tax breaks or training levies are in place. Schools raise some income, particularly through tuition and examination fees, so learners make a small contribution. A transparent and purposeful budget process is provided for in the legislation, and could link finance to reforms, but this procedure has not been applied since 2005.

While some steps are being taken in the governance of VTE to set up aspects of quality assurance, these are at present ad hoc. Examples include ad hoc work with industrialists on improving the links between skills demand and supply, the GIZ-supported dual system development and preparatory work on NQF. But Steps being taken do not engage the attention of all actors. On the other hand, some facets of more traditional quality control are in place such as the state exams and the inspectorate. There is a clear intention to develop a more adequate quality assurance approach through the Action Plan.

The report contains 16 recommendations. The first of four recommendations for government is to activate the MEHE’s 2011-14 Strategic Multi-annual Action Plan, beginning with a wider public consultation on the lines of action proposed, so that the action plan is updated and made operational. To provide more continuity of reforms, the action plan should then be updated annually and revised every four years or according to parliamentary cycles. The Torino process can support this regular assessment. The recommendations make a strong call for the roles of public sector agencies to be reviewed and fully activated and for the development of systematic and purposeful dialogue and cooperation with employer organisations, to include key aspects such as financing, funding and quality assurance. Finally, steps are proposed that can lead to local training providers increasing their responsiveness, autonomy and accountability and also to improving management and labour market information systems.

INTRODUCTION

This report will describe the situation concerning the governance of VTE, with particular reference to VTE management, how finance and funding are organised, and the extent to which quality assurance approaches are being harnessed; the purpose is to help to secure improvements in VTE policy and implementation. It will go on to consider which improvements to aspects of VTE governance can be made and how these can be introduced. The report is based on the expectation that VTE – alongside other education sub-systems and productive sectors - has an important role to play in developments in the Lebanese context and that realistic improvements in VTE governance can assist all the agencies and stakeholders who engage with VTE to make sure that the sector can better fulfil its labour market and social missions, and make a positive contribution to innovation. The report begins with a synthesis of the more detailed mapping of the governance of VTE in Lebanon that was carried out by the National Committee of ETF's GEMM project.

In the recent World Economic Forum Global Competitiveness Report, Lebanon takes tenth position among 144 countries on the overall quality of its educational systems. As a whole, education is highly rated. Yet, Lebanon occupies a low rank on the extent of staff training (102nd), the ratio of women to men on the labour force (138th) and also on the capacity for innovation (114th). The UNDP's Human Resource Development Index provides a broad measure of national development and well-being by combining health, education and income indicators. On this scale Lebanon has a rank of 72nd country out of 187. This is just below the average for the advanced countries and well above the regional average. Of particular interest for this report, the World Bank Institute publishes Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) on more than 200 countries: the higher the percentage, the better the ranking. The percentages in brackets show Lebanon's ranking². WGI covers the issues of voice and accountability (mid 30%), political stability and absence of violence (bottom 10%), government effectiveness (lower 40%), regulatory quality (mid 50% and rising), rule of law (on 30%), and control of corruption (on 20%). Although these statistics can be taken as cause for concern that may also apply to an analysis of governance in a particular field of public and private administration, it is at least encouraging that the country performs most highly on the regulatory quality criterion and next most highly (in 2011) on government effectiveness.

The main features of the Lebanese labour market are the high level of unemployment among young people, the low rates of female participation in economic life, the large size of the informal sector, the influx of foreign workers and refugees from Palestine, recently from Syria³ and from other neighbouring countries, and the large number of skilled Lebanese people seeking and obtaining employment abroad. Despite the significant economic growth since 2000, which has dipped in the past year or two, and the highest gross domestic product (GDP) per capita in the region (USD 9,705.32 in 2012, World Bank), the labour market activity rate in Lebanon remains among the lowest in the Mediterranean region (48% in 2009).

The situation of VTE, which is not highly regarded in the way that general education is, can be summarised as follows: The VTE system is governed by the Directorate General of Vocational and Technical Education (DGVTE) which falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). The DGVTE manages 227 private and 108 public institutes, schools and training centres covering initial VTE. 27 schools implement the dual system approach supported by GIZ. There

²The highest ranking countries are at 100%, the lowest at 0%. Source: adapted from <http://info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/pdf/c124.pdf>

³As a result of the Syrian crisis, the number of Syrian refugees has reached around 800 000 in 2013 although government figures talk of 2 million people. This puts security as first priority in the country political debate and donors' attention (including the EU) and creates high social and economic pressure.

are also 29 schools managed under the Joint Programme, a collaborative arrangement between private and public entities. The DGVTE does not cover continuing training, which is generally given insufficient attention, and is low on the list of priorities in public policy and expenditure; thus it cannot be said that a lifelong learning approach is adopted in Lebanon⁴.

The report aims to inform and assist government and stakeholders as they address some key questions about the future governance of VTE. The report reflects on how improved VTE governance can bring about:

- more relevant outcomes for learners who are aiming at labour market entry and progression, including women and young people;
- increased contribution of VTE to achieving the economic and social objectives identified in Lebanon's human resources development strategies, and in more innovative ways;
- the modernisation and engagement in more productive partnerships;
- a more significant and dynamic role of social partners in policy development and implementation;
- a stronger regional or local dimension (if relevant);
- more autonomy and accountability to the VTE providers.

⁴ Due to the limited public programmes covering continuing training the mapping could not go in depth in the analysis of this part of the VTE system. The majority of initiatives in continuing training rely on civil society programmes. The National Employment Office puts in place some programmes called short training courses (formations courtes) lasting limited number of hours on specific skills (mainly ICT skills). These initiatives are however sporadic and not framed in a lifelong learning education strategy.

1. MAPPING VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION GOVERNANCE – KEY POINTS

1.1 Mapping of the VTE system management

The vocational and technical education and training system (VTE) lies within the areas of responsibility of the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE). The system is administered by the Directorate General of Vocational and Technical Education (DGVTE), which comprises seven departments. The director general leads DGVTE and is mandated by the minister and through the legislation to manage the policy and administrative matters including school management, curriculum and qualifications development and implementation, employment decisions, oversight of the private sector of training schools, the organisation of programmes and most day-to-day management decisions in the schools and centres. The DGVTE is also responsible for the State Examinations and the inspectorate.

VTE governance is centralised. The Ministry initiates policies, has a role in major decision-making and acts as the main financier for public TVTE system from Government revenue, and the minister is a strategic actor. The Directorate General of VTE also initiates policy and is a key strategic player, making decisions, funding the public providers and is responsible for assessment and quality control. Although both the ministry and the DGVTE have a policy role with a legal basis, subsequent decrees and legislative acts have complicated the delineation of roles between the ministry and the DGVTE.

Two other bodies have a legally defined role in the management of VTE: the Higher Council for VTE and the Centre for Education Research and Development (CERD). The Higher Council for VTE was established by government decree to operate as an advisory body to the DGVTE. However, despite broad agreement on its role and mission, the Council has never been activated and has never met. The Council is formally headed by the minister of MEHE; it includes representatives of the various education entities, other ministries, public administration bodies and the private sector. The role of the council is to provide advice on proposed laws and strategic and policy development, budgets, decrees to establish new private schools, decrees to open new public schools, and other matters referred to it by the minister of MEHE. CERD is intended to have a more applied research and development role. Contrary to the Higher Council for VTE, CERD is operational, although mostly in the field of general education. It is also intended to have a significant role in VTE and, in particular, to provide research and analysis that applies to aspects such as the VTE curriculum and its development, training and standards for teachers and improving the management of VTE providers. However, to date CERD has been given little if any effective role to play in supporting VTE policy or implementation.

The public training providers (representing around 40% of the overall training offer) have little, if any, autonomy to take local management decisions and depend totally on management of the DGVTE. On the other hand, the large numbers of private training providers have management and funding independence, providing they use the state examination system, and are subject to some measures of DGVTE quality control, such as initial accreditation when they start up. Additionally, the National Council for Social Services is an umbrella organisation for a consortium of around 50 private training providers, many of whom are supported by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and some of whom have been innovative in terms of reforms.

At the current stage of development, employers and their organisations are largely absent as key partners in VTE governance and management and human resources development in general. In the public sector of initial training, some initiatives involving employers are to be found such as in the dual system development led by GIZ, the EU-led agro-food training initiative and in the DGVTE-funded

special projects. Although limited in terms of numbers and scope, these initiatives have engaged with new approaches to industry-supported ways of identifying training needs, more innovative curricula and cooperation with employers. However employers' involvement is still limited and not institutionalised. The trades unions hardly feature as partners or consultants, mostly due to their limited capacities and aims in human resource development.

In 2010 the government approved a National Education Strategy Framework and a related Education Sector Development Plan (for general education) 2010–15, which includes the vision of the MEHE, and more detailed strategy and development objectives covering access, quality of education for a knowledge society, and the education system's role in achieving economic and social objectives. VTE was not included in this wider strategy, however a strategic multi-annual action plan for VTE reform was developed and approved in 2011.

This plan was developed drawing significantly from the recommendations of the 2010 Torino Process, to which the MEHE agreed to participate since then. This plan is intended to give direction to the review and modernisation of the VTE system. However, although some progress has been made, some key challenges still need to be addressed and a larger involvement of stakeholders should be sought (particularly employers). A more detailed time plan should be developed and indication of accountable actors for the implementation should be included.

1.2 Finance and funding

The principle source of finance for public VTE administered by the DGVTE is the general public budget, which comprises income gathered from taxation and other sources. Funding is dispensed by the government. The current budgeting framework has no provision to encourage employers to support VTE, and no tax breaks or training levies are in place. Schools raise some income, particularly through tuition and examination fees, which means that learners and their families make a small contribution.

According to the legislation, the annual budget allocation process for funding VTE provision begins with the directors of VTE schools and institutes and DGVTE departments submitting their needs on a standard budget items form. The DGVTE consolidates all budget requests, then adjusts them as deemed appropriate and submits the overall DGVTE budget to the MEHE. The minister of the MEHE modifies and consolidates requests from all ministry units before submitting a complete MEHE budget to the Council of ministers for approval. After this, the minister of Finance amends the allocations after taking account of competing requests for available resources. The Council of ministers submits the complete government budget to the Parliament for approval and its adoption as a budget law. This could be quite a transparent and purposeful process, linking finance to reforms.

However this budget procedure, which has not been applied since 2005, also linked to the overall socio-political instability and the subsequent war and successive care taking governments. Since then, the government has followed a different procedure for annual Budget Proposals, which have not been discussed or approved by Parliament. In practice, the minister of Finance applies a procedure known as the Twelfth Budget Rule. This entails taking the previous year's budget for each government unit or department, adjusting it for changes (in particular due to increases in personnel) that have occurred and dividing the total budget by 12 to determine the unit's monthly budget. This approach to funding, which can be described as incremental or historical, means that the annual budget allocated to the DGVTE over successive years has been approximately 10 % higher than in the previous year.

The DGVTE budget was 0.5% of the total government budget in 2009. In the same year salaries and benefits for DGVTE personnel (teachers, workers, and administrators) constituted 94% of the overall DGVTE budget, leaving little room for flexibility whether at national or local level. In an otherwise centralised funding regime, VTE schools have some limited operational responsibility through the

funding that comes mainly from the tuition and examination fees collected from students. 90% of the collected fees stay in the school to cover the cost of maintenance and cleaning services and minor purchases. Larger purchases, such as IT equipment, must have formal DGVTE approval. The remaining 10% goes as contribution to the VTE Internal Fund (IF) that was created by decree in 1996. More than half of the IF budget is spent on Joint Programmes and a major part is used to support one hospitality school, which is the only school that has the local management responsibility to engage in profit-making activity. Whatever is left of the IF funds goes to support other schools, especially small schools, on a needs basis. With the exception of the hospitality school, the level of financial responsibility delegated to school leaders is very limited.

Very little input is asked from VTE stakeholders (whether education and training providers or employers) on budget needs and allocations, nor on the adequacy of funding. Because a historical funding mechanism is adopted in practice, there is no clear needs analysis, no mechanism to use funding VTE providers as an incentive to achieving specific reforms or outcomes and no formula-based budget to incentivise school or system-wide improvements.

Just as setting the budget framework is the centralised responsibility of the Ministry of Finance, MEHE and DGTVE takes the decisions on the use of funds, so the Ministry of Finance and DGVTE are responsible for such monitoring and evaluation as takes place. There are no widely-available published financial or budgeting reports, so the only information one can obtain on allocated budget spending for VTE is through a request to the Financial Department of the DGTVE. Since fiscal transactions have been guided by budget proposals and not budget laws since 2006, the only entity that knows accurately how and where funds are spent may be the Ministry of Finance.

1.3 Quality assurance

VTE quality assurance arrangements can be taken to mean that a reasonably systematic set of procedures and processes that are based on principles of accountability, transparency and effectiveness are in place, in order to ensure that the behaviours and activities of all actors engaged in VTE (whether in government, higher education or as VTE providers, whether in the public or the private sector) are congruent with criteria, standards, and norms that have been established in order to achieve clear and purposeful goals and outcomes through the work of the VTE sector.

While some steps are being taken in the governance of VTE in Lebanon to set up some aspects of quality assurance, these are at present ad hoc, and there is no breadth of vision and application. The quality assurance initiatives that are being taken are not systematic, nor do they engage the attention of all actors.

There are a number of ad hoc initiatives (bottom-up) in which quality assurance figures significantly across the policy cycle from planning through implementation to review. They include early and ad hoc work on discussing with Lebanese industrialists how to improve the links between skilling learners in education and training and meeting labour market needs, some of them already mentioned (the GIZ supported dual system and the Agro-food EU funded project). The Torino process assessment of the VTE system also has created a platform to review the VTE system where actors representing public and private providers, NGOs and industrialists associations meet to discuss and review how the system functions and to draw recommendations. More traditional quality control measures are found somewhat more commonly, although it would be difficult to argue convincingly that these are an effective system of quality assurance. Among others, DGVTE has quality control measures in place to cover the following: private training schools and centres have to have DGVTE recognition, use national programmes, enter students into the national system of examinations' have endorsement of the DGVTE for the appointment of a new principal, and must be accredited by DGVTE before they can operate, after which there is no further provision for inspection. Minimum quality procedures are in place for some qualifications; for example, the new 'bac technique' qualifications

identify intended learning outcomes, although the curriculum and assessment are formulated in a more traditional way. Similarly, qualifications (but not standards) expected of civil servants and teachers are specified in the legal documents, and formally entry to permanent employment is through the exam done by the civil service board (conseil de la formation publique). However, it is some years since the last competition was put in place for VTE teachers and principals, and in practice there is such a shortage of full-time professionals that teaching staff consists substantially of people who have some qualification and are only employed part-time (according to the Torino Process 2012 only 10% of teachers worked full time). All the above relate to more or less traditional forms of centralised quality control rather than to attempts to improve outcomes through a quality assurance approach that engages all stakeholders in appropriate ways at different levels in the system.

There is a clear intention to develop a more adequate quality assurance approach. The MEHE's 2011-14 Strategic Multi-annual Action Plan for VTE is intended to review and modernise the VTE structure and administration, strengthen the partnership and cooperation with social partners and other stakeholders and enhance the image of VTE. The action plan also mentions revising, updating and improving the vocational specializations and curricula and securing and increasing human and financial resources. Reviewing and modernising the structure, management and administration of VTE at the national and local level and strengthening the co-working with social partners and other stakeholders would usher in major reforms for VTE governance, and would certainly have to be linked to a rather more comprehensive and inclusive system of quality assurance. The Action Plan also states the intention to create a Quality Assurance Agency for VTE (currently to be established for Higher Education).

The foregoing gives an indication of the elements of a quality assurance system and process that are developing, albeit somewhat hesitantly, and the more traditional measures of quality control that exist in the VTE system at the present state of development. The next section of the report will provide further analysis of key issues, consider what is missing, and make recommendations about what government and stakeholders can achieve.

2. ANALYSIS

2.1 Self-evaluation of VTE governance in Lebanon

With the mapping of the current situation complete, the GEMM National Committee surveyed its members and a small number of other national stakeholders in order to gain a clearer impression of how successful and effective key players perceive current VTE governance to be. Using a grid of 25 indicators organised around six principles, 17 expert respondents indicated how frequently they consider the current governance system to enable good performance and outcomes in the VTE system.

The six principles of good governance are summarised as 'relevance', 'effectiveness', 'subsidiarity and proportionality of decision-making', 'transparency', 'accountability' and 'participation'. For all the principles (6) and indicators (25) the respondents' (17) responses clustered cumulatively around the statements 'very rarely' (118 responses), 'rarely' (121 responses) and 'occasionally' (106 responses). Forty six responses ticked the box for 'never', only 17 for 'frequently' and zero for 'very frequently'. If the diagnosis achieved through this expert survey has weight and validity, it leads to the conclusion that this is a critical self-evaluation of the efficacy of VTE governance mechanisms, and that much has to be done.

It is noteworthy that the most positively assessed indicator is that 'both hard regulation (laws, etc.) and soft regulation (recommendations, opinions, cooperation, agreements etc.) are used and applied at each stage and level in the policy cycle'.

The most negatively self-assessed principle concerns participation in VTE governance. This comprises a negative response to all four indicators, which are expressed as statements.

- The appropriate range of stakeholders is engaged collaboratively throughout the VTE policy cycle.
- Different government agencies (e.g. ministries) and the different levels of government (e.g. national/regional/local) are engaged actively.
- Coordinated participation mechanisms (e.g. social dialogue, consultation, advisory bodies) enable stakeholders to participate at key points.
- Different actors, at vertical and horizontal levels, are working in partnership to shape anticipation of the VTE policies and systems related issues (e.g. by using foresight methodologies).

Other indicators that received strongly critical self-assessment are as follows.

- Governance systems mobilise sufficient financing and funding mechanisms at all levels of the VTE system.
- Governance systems respond to learner and labour market needs, e.g. by introducing more flexibility, linking formal and informal sectors, developing more outcomes-based approaches.
- Decisions are taken at the most appropriate level and/or at the lowest level to optimise VTE policy implementation.
- The VTE policy cycle is an open process that engages the identified relevant stakeholders.
- Decision makers assess and respect the contributions and recommendations of different VTE stakeholders.

Interestingly, respondents took a somewhat less negative view of how governance systems support the social role of VTE, as compared to VTE's economic role. This is an indication of the perception of VTE purpose, more orientated to societal demand, 'holding station', second chance to compensate for poor primary education etc., which in turns impacts on relevance for the labour market, governance, and QA and financing.

The results of the mapping and self-assessment work call for further analysis of several of the key issues raised in the introduction to this report. These are dealt with below, so that government and stakeholders can give these matters further consideration.

2.2 VTE leadership at national level

The Lebanese social and political context in recent memory has meant that identifying and carrying through a successful reform programme in the longer term in the field of VTE is a challenging and often frustrating process. The management of reform and leadership of the VTE system have depended substantially on the personalities occupying key roles, in particular the minister and the director general, rather than on the development and implementation of longer-term and broadly agreed plans for more systematic development. The division of senior posts between the religious groups is part of the civil settlement, but decreases the pool from which candidates for some posts can be considered. Furthermore, governance of VTE has been led within a narrow network of participation and without much engagement on the part of other ministries, organisations of employers and industrialists, nor with much engagement of the professionals who should help to shape or who should implement successful programs and reforms.

Nevertheless, and in spite of the frustrations, some progress has been made and an immediate task is to identify how the range of reforms needed to make the VTE system more effective can be identified, and then made operational. To date, reforms have been piecemeal and often are not carried through, and no one has yet made a determined attempt to initiate widespread, thorough, incremental and lasting reforms. This is in contrast to countries that have developed successful VTE systems, such as Singapore, Korea, Denmark, Netherlands and Finland. A policy tool that is already on the table has the potential to support the identification of priorities, key areas and challenges, and the policies and actions that can support implementation. Although the MEHE's 2011-14 Strategic Multi-annual Action Plan for VTE has not been put to use in the ways that were, presumably, intended, it does identify four priority areas for development and reform, and it could now be used by MEHE and DGVTE to identify the range of reforms that are most crucial. The regular assessment of the VTE system through the Torino process will continue to support a regular reflection and discussion on the system and its efficiency. The Strategic Multi-annual Action Plan has the important advantage that it is linked to the national education strategy and, therefore, to the country's planned-for human resource development. Linking to the values and aims of the national education strategy, the Strategic Multi-annual Action Plan for VTE identifies these issues for urgent development:

1. reviewing and modernising the structure and administration of VTE;
2. strengthening the partnership and cooperating with social partners and other stakeholders;
3. enhancing the image of VTE;
4. revising, updating and improving vocational specialisms (including their geographical distribution) and curricula;
5. ensuring and increasing the availability of human and financial resources.

International experience shows both that VTE reforms and the methods used to achieve them have to fit the particular country context. It also places emphasis on the conclusion that there is no 'silver

bullet', but rather that successful VTE reform depends on linking together appropriate policy and improved practice in nine or ten different areas. These include: linking VTE development to national priorities and human resources development; improving governance and partnership; bringing the systems supplying skills in the labour market closer to clearly identified labour market skills needs; for reforming qualifications and curricula to be more clearly competence-based, perhaps under the linking umbrella of a national qualifications framework; putting learners at the centre of reform programmes, whilst enabling local providers to take more responsibility for improving quality and outcomes; improvements to funding sources and methodologies; ensuring that the teachers and trainers are up to the job and that IT is used optimally; making sure that there are good management information systems in place. VTE has to contribute to both economic and social objectives, and to foster innovation.

An important dimension is that quality assurance gradually develops as a component that contributes significantly to the full range of improvement. Improving the supply and training of teachers is already mentioned as a priority, as is ensuring and increasing financial resources. A work programme built around discussing more widely, refining and implementing the strategic action plan could go a long way, barriers notwithstanding, to addressing the key concerns raised in this mapping and analysis. Improving governance systems, procedures and relationships should facilitate the planning and implementation processes. This could be a first, significant step.

Within government circles, there can be tangible gains from such steps as identifying clearly the roles and the most efficient interactions and functioning modalities of the Ministry, DGVTE, CERD and the other ministries and units (i.e. Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Labour through the National Employment Office, Ministry of Social Affairs) that have a role in the management and leadership of VTE systems and reforms.

2.3 Social dialogue and partnership

The mapping and analysis of VTE governance leads to a simple but important conclusion. Until now governance has been centralised almost entirely in the hands of the Ministry and of DGVTE, yet this has not proved effective in establishing and implementing modernising reforms; nor will a management system in which almost all the responsibilities remain centralised deal effectively with the current and future facing VTE. Furthermore, the vicissitudes of change and overall socio-political instability in Lebanon have left governance quite fragile, so that decisions are often 'personalised' in a few hands and - because personnel change - it has proved difficult to maintain consistency of reform.

Collaboration between the representatives of employers and the public agencies and training providers can lead to a better intelligence on labour market skills trends and needs, a more active role in developing and implementing strategies for skilling learners appropriately, a more thorough engagement of employers in providing aspects of training such as work placement, internships, facilities and an active role in assessment, and also a more pro-active role in financing learning. Developing and maintaining a national qualifications framework can be a useful forum for bringing stakeholders together in a formal and purposeful way, and also establish quality criteria for establishing and reforming qualifications, curricula and diverse forms of assessment and for improving access and increasing the flexibility of VTE and the other sub-systems.

As well as developing a more coherent approach to identifying the roles and functions of government and its agencies, there is a strong argument in the case of VTE for government to engage seriously with wider stakeholders. As yet, this has happened only to a very limited extent, although there are some 'green shoots' of growth.

Most notably, this means engaging with employers and their organisations. VTE, it should be remembered, links two sets of market: the labour markets – formal, informal and international – for

skills utilisation and the training supply market, through whose schools and centres learners should acquire appropriate technical and generic skills for employment. The case for this engagement is particularly strong in Lebanon, where there is a prominent culture of markets and entrepreneurialism, even as this exists alongside the traditional bonds of group affiliation. Consultation on some policy issues has already introduced the idea of a closer partnership between government and employers on training issues, but this has not yet been followed through to a level of participation, accountability and transparency that can generate greater effectiveness and efficiency in the VTE systems. Government has taken the first firm steps in this direction through enabling legislating for the Higher Council for VTE, formally establishing a high-level forum that can both operate as an effective model of partnership, and agree new ways in which appropriate and transparent fora for partnership can be developed where helpful and worthwhile relating to the different areas of VTE and human resources development policy that this report has touched on.

It should not be imagined that employers and their organisations in Lebanon are ready, waiting and arguing for a clearer role and partnership in VTE governance in Lebanon. On the contrary, compared to some other countries in the region, such as Egypt, employers here have been more reticent, while in some neighbouring countries such as Jordan there is more experience of VTE policy development through partnership, even though the roles and responsibilities have not always been clear, and finance for working policy into practice may be been insufficient. Employers' and industry organisation need encouragement to become partners at the table, and will require some further self-analysis and capacity building. In terms of employee representation in VTE governance, this is even more so the case; trade unions do not really see themselves as organised for such a role at present.

An argument could be made for more of a 'big bang' approach to establishing VTE partnerships and a prominent role for employers, for example through setting up sector councils or sector skills councils. This has occurred in some countries. The risk in the short and medium term of such a step in the Lebanese context is that, essentially, government would legislate for a major new set of institutions to be established in a field in which there is not experience or a strong tradition, resulting possibly in another grand hope that could be both costly and unlikely to succeed in many of the employment sectors. On the other hand, lessons learnt for the dual system experiment and from more needs driven initiatives elsewhere in the VTE system could lead to a deeper engagement of employers in VTE developments, both at national level and with public and private schools, on a more bottom-up basis.

There is a strong case also for involving the private sector of training and NGOs in dialogue and growing partnership. For the former, this would entail at least a significant shift beyond the current provisions for quality control to a more proactive set of provisions for quality assurance.

2.4 Territorial dimension

Comparatively speaking, Lebanon is relatively small and compact country and its population is smaller than half the size of one of the world's major cities. For this reason it does not appear appropriate at present to set up another tier of governance at subnational-territorial level between the national and provider levels.

Nevertheless, since DGVTE already has an operation at regional level and department that supervises this, some further analysis should take place to ensure that the tasks that are carried out in the regions for the director-general are as efficient and worthwhile as possible.

With regard to the territorial dimension, two issues need careful attention as the case arises. Firstly, care has to be taken that the religious groupings are appropriately involved in training arrangements in the areas in which there are prominent among the local population while at the same time responding to specific local socio-economic needs. Secondly, where industrial and employment initiatives are

taken in particular regions or zones, local partnership arrangements should be put into place on a case-by-case basis in order to ensure that training needs and provision are properly provided for as part of the wider strategy or development and provide the new skills needed for the emerging labour markets, and to providing equitable and realistic opportunities to groups that are in danger of exclusion, such as young people and women in the labour market.

2.5 Increasing responsiveness, autonomy and accountability of VTE providers

In contrast to the subsidiary role that regions should probably play in the governance of VET, a change in the management role of the local schools and other training providers - and, in particular, school leaders and directors - is of prime importance if VTE provision and outcomes are to become more responsive to employment and skills needs and, at the same time, more accountable to government and stakeholders.

Currently, although they clearly take some smaller decisions at the local level, the ways in which school directors and their colleagues operate, at least in the public sector of provision, is micromanaged centrally from the directorate general. Whilst a sound, participatory framework for the central governance of VET has to remain a key feature of the system, the more local counterpart to a growing reliance on quality assurance systems is that school leaders locally have a sensible degree of local management responsibility, within a clear regulatory framework and a clear framework of functional responsibilities that are supported and evaluated through quality assurance mechanisms.

Increasing local management responsibilities and accountability is intended to ensure that school principals and their associated school boards and development plans are responsive to the needs of their students, local communities and to the local and wider needs of the labour market. In essence, this means devolving to school principals and the relevant local committees and appropriate amount of autonomy to take some decisions concerning the management of the school, how priorities can be met in terms of human and financial resources, the organisation of teaching and learning programmes and, local networks that engage the community and the world of work actively in the work of the school.

This is not entirely a new line of activity in Lebanon. The private training schools that the government recognises already have this kind of responsibility. Indeed, the directors of the private schools probably have already considerably more autonomy than would be delegated to the directors of public schools and centres. Furthermore, a characteristic of the dual system initiative in more than 20 schools has been the engagement of the school with local industries, and the requirement that work placement, work experience or internship is an integral and valued part of any vocational training. Indeed, key characteristics of modern, more learning centred vocational training are that, tasks that the learner is set are authentic, that learners gain experience of learning and problem solving in real, realistic or simulated work situations, and that the knowledge and skills that the learners are gaining in practice are allied to the knowledge and skills that are valued in the labour market.

Lessons can be learnt from the dual system initiative, from the experience of the private sector of training and also from some of the special projects that DGVTE has initiated and supported. Furthermore, local pilot projects are an integral part of ETF's approach to the GEMM project, for which this report has been prepared. Learning from this limited experience of local management in schools through other projects, the GEMM pilot projects at the local level should be useful incubators for exploring how to take the devolution of responsibility and the setting up of accountability measures some way further forward, in the context.

Devolution of some powers to the local level raises more than a question of a sound regulatory framework. It calls for discussion between the national and local level, the formation of links and

partnerships between the school and local communities and industry, adequate funding arrangements that can help to generate change. Principally, training and capacity building of the teachers and managers in the VTE schools involved will be needed, as will support in building the local networks envisaged.

2.6 Improving the evidence-based policy approach to steering VTE policy making in multi-participatory environments

In many respects the current lack of the kinds of data and information needed for sound decisions and effective policy-making leaves both the policymakers and practitioners in a position of weakness. This concerns data across the different aspects of VET policy and practice such as finance, a detailed understanding of the human resource and other needs of training providers, clarity and detail about the occupational clusters and the technical and generic knowledge and skills that learners should be equipped with for different programs. Although there are plans to improve the advice and guidance systems available to learners, it appears that the information available to them as they make the transition between education and the labour market is also sparse.

It is difficult to imagine how schools can effectively prepare young people with the skills they need, unless there is good information about labour market trends and skills demand. Unless planners can identify proactively the human and financial resources that the schools need to make improvements, it is difficult to see how the VET system can be efficient. Furthermore, unless the stakeholders in a more partnership-based approach to governance receive and contribute regularly to good intelligence about how the system is working and what its current and future challenges are, it is difficult to understand how their contribution can be effective. These considerations lead to the conclusion that some major development of labour market profiling and management information systems for the VET sector are matters of priority. This report has touched on a number of these issues, which stakeholders in Lebanon should give further and careful attention to.

2.7 Summary: GEMM National Committee's evaluation of strengths and weaknesses

The members of the National committee for the ETF's GEMM project, who are currently giving their time to consider these questions of the VTE governance, represent key interests among the government and its agencies, and also across the public and private sector. This adds weight to the committee's self-evaluation of current approaches to VTE governance with an analysis of strengths and weaknesses.

TABLE 2.1 GEMM NATIONAL COMMITTEE'S SWOT ANALYSIS OF VTE GOVERNANCE IN LEBANON (ADAPTED)

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Basic infrastructure to accommodate improved governance is already available ■ Various stakeholders are ready to embrace policies and participate in their development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A comprehensive policy framework to move forward on does not yet exist ■ The authorities often take a lukewarm attitude to developing policies ■ Over-centralised governance may slow the realisation of policies
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Labour market is calling for graduates with relevant knowledge, skills and abilities ■ Graduates are needed with skills in new technologies ■ Lebanon has a pool of talent able to develop effective policies and manage their implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There is limited public awareness of the need to participate in the work involved ■ Mild commitment of some stakeholders ■ VTE graduates do not have the knowledge, skills and competences demanded by labour markets ■ Non-availability of adequate funds to establish relevant and modern VTE programmes that attract highly qualified students

RECOMMENDATIONS

The mapping and further analysis of VTE governance in Lebanon leads to a number of recommendations to support the design, plan, implement and keep under review further action and reform. Because the GEMM mapping concerns governance specifically, the recommendations refer to aspects of governance. These have implications for the efficiency and effectiveness of the VTE system as a whole, but the recommendations attempt to keep governance clearly in the frame.

Consolidating the government's strategic approach to VTE governance

Recommendation 1. MEHE and DGVTE should activate the MEHE's 2011-14 Strategic Multi-annual Action Plan, beginning with a wider public consultation on the lines of action proposed, so that the action plan is updated and made operational. To provide more continuity of reforms, the action plan should then be updated annually and revised every four years or according to parliamentary cycles. The Torino process can support this regular assessment.

Recommendation 2. MEHE and DGVTE should identify clearly the respective roles, responsibility and accountability of the Ministry, DGVTE, CERD and the diverse ministries and public-sector units that have a central role in the management and leadership of VTE systems and reforms.

Recommendation 3. MEHE should consider with its government partners how best to make financing and funding methods, procedures and reporting more transparent, with a view to ensuring sufficient funds and a more appropriate sharing of responsibilities for management decision making with VTE providers. Funding mechanisms should also consider allocation based on results of the VTE provision rather than on the number of students only.

Recommendation 4. MEHE and DGVTE should review the aspects of quality assurance that are developing and the elements of quality control that are in place. Further needs and feasibility analysis will then be needed, so as to work towards a more comprehensive approach to quality and accountability throughout the VTE system.

Social dialogue and partnership

Recommendation 5. MEHE should now activate the Higher Council for VTE engage with employers and their organisations more systematically, and to bring other member organisations into formal, organised dialogue. The modus operandi of the Higher Council for VTE should be negotiated with its members, so that it can act as the umbrella for a partnership-based approach to VTE governance.

Recommendation 6. Employers' organisations, Chambers, etc. should review their policies on identifying labour market needs and on education and training policy, and they should analyse carefully how to build up their organisational capacity to deal with these issues. They should accord continuing training higher priority in terms of planning and provision.

Recommendation 7. The trade union federations should consider how they might be better prepared in terms of policy and organisation to be partners or consultees in VTE governance. They should make a strong case for continuing training to be given a higher priority.

Recommendation 8. DGVTE should task CERD further research on involving the private sector of training and NGOs in dialogue and growing partnership, and on how best to link the formal and informal sectors of training in the different labour markets with respect to curricula reform and development.

Territorial dimensions

Recommendation 9. MEHE and DGVTE should work with employers and training providers to set up partnership arrangements to ensure that human resources development provision is effective in any regional or local industrial development initiatives. However, it does not appear appropriate at present to set up another tier of governance at the regional level.

Increasing responsiveness, autonomy and accountability of VTE providers

Recommendation 10. MEHE should amend the regulatory framework so that VTE providers gradually take on more devolved management responsibilities, including funding arrangements, the formation of local partnerships and a sensible level of devolved responsibility for designing the vocational programmes.

Recommendation 11. The Higher Council for VTE should nurture links and partnerships between schools and local industries.

Recommendation 12. DGVTE, universities and the teacher trainers should identify and meet the qualification, training and capacity building needs of the teachers and managers in the VTE schools so that they are ready to take on more local responsibility and accountability.

Recommendation 13. Teachers' professional organisations should consult with their members and make representations about the training and capacity-building needs that reformed school governance will call for.

Improving the data and evidence base

Recommendation 14. The MEHE and DGVTE should set up and improve its VTE management information system, including tracer studies.

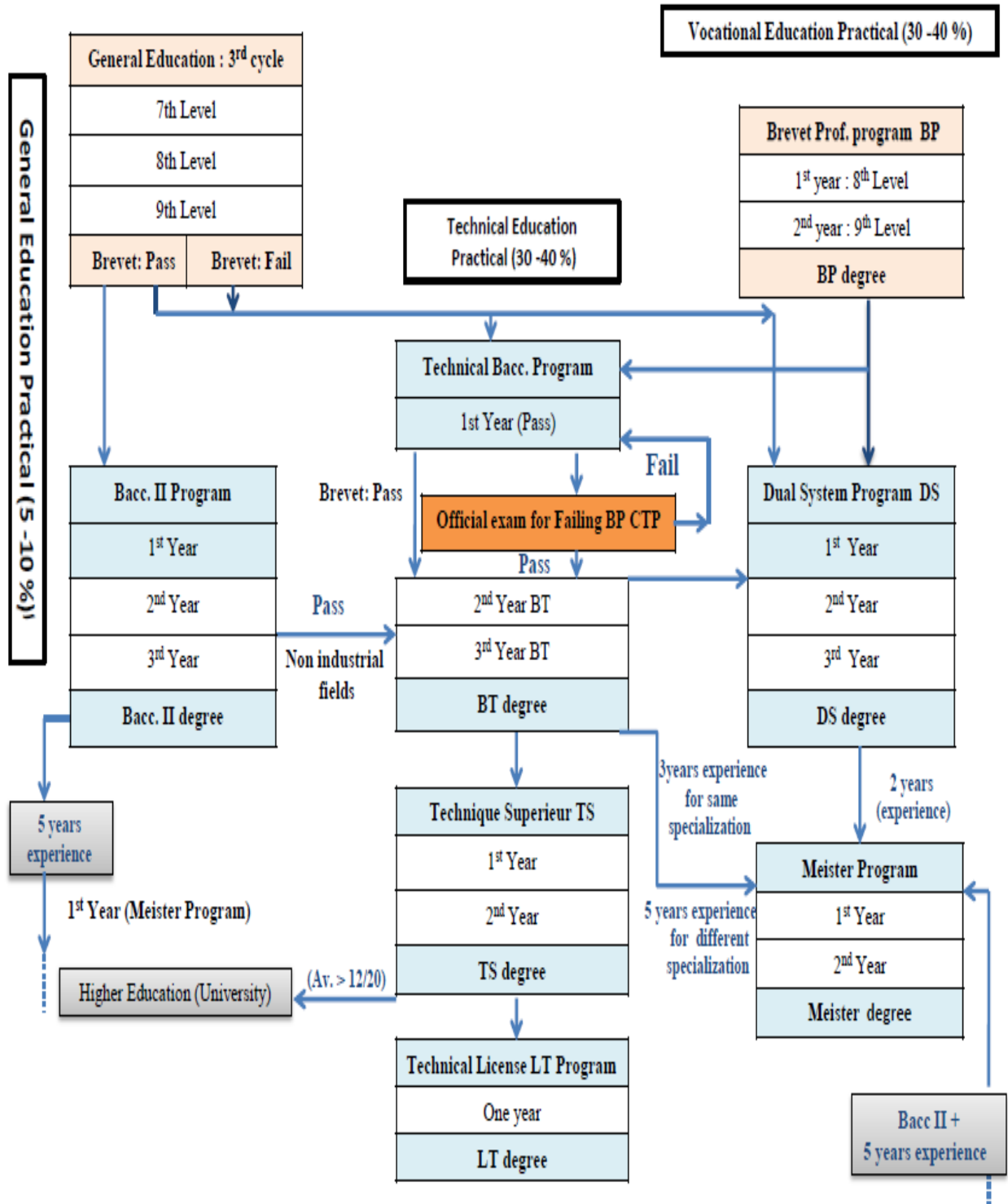
Recommendation 15. The MEHE and DGVTE should interact more efficiently with the Ministry of Labour and National Employment Office to improve the labour market information base which is regularly updated.

Capacity building

Recommendation 16. All the government agencies and the wider stakeholders should now pay attention to and build up the capacities that are cited in this report as needed to build up more responsive and efficient governance systems. Each organisation should conduct its own analysis of its capabilities, gaps and capacity building needs.

The GEMM project will look at specific capacity building needs of VTE actors in this respect and will support the development of specific capacity building actions to address those needs.

ANNEX 1: STRUCTURE OF THE VTE SYSTEM




ACRONYMS

CERD	Centre for Educational Research and Development
DGVTE	Directorate General for Vocational and Technical Education
ETF	European Training Foundation
GDP	Gross domestic product
GEMM	Governance for employability in the Mediterranean
HCVTE	Higher Council for Vocational and Technical Education
IF	Internal fund
MEHE	Ministry of Education and Higher Education
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
VTE	Vocational and technical education
WGI	World Governance Indicators

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information, please see the ETF website:

www.etf.europa.eu/gemm

 [etfgemm](https://twitter.com/etfgemm)

or contact:

info@etf.europa.eu