

QUALITY ASSURANCE IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN EGYPT

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 National context

Egypt is a lower-middle-income country with a rapidly growing population: the average annual growth rate was around 2.6% from 2015 to 2019, when the population grew from 87.9 million to 98.1 million¹. Young people aged 15 to 24 represented 28.1% of the population in 2018, while almost two-thirds (61.0%) were under the age of 29².

Gas extraction, tourism, wholesale and retail trade, real estate and construction have been the main sectors driving economic growth in recent years.

Egypt has a large informal economy estimated to represent 40% of gross domestic product, where businesses in the informal sector are characterised by their small size and low level of organisation.

The Egyptian labour force is steadily increasing, at an annual rate of 1.8%; however, the biggest share of working-aged Egyptians (i.e. aged 15+) are not in the labour force, yielding a labour force participation rate, in 2017, as low as 45%. Crucially, the participation rate of women in the labour market was 22% in 2017, one-third of the participation rate of men: 66.9%. Women also face a high unemployment rate, recording 23.0% in 2017, almost three times as much as for men at 8.2%.

1.2 Statistics

TABLE 1. POPULATION

	Size of population	Size of youth population (% 15–24)
2010	77 840 000	32
2014	85 783 000	29.7
2018	96 279 000	28.1

Source: Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics (CAPMAS), www.capmas.gov.eg/Pages/StaticPages.aspx?page_id=5034

TABLE 2. EMPLOYMENT

	Employment rate (15+)	Employment rate of young people (15–24)
2010	45.1	26.3
2014	41.8	22.9
2017	39.7	20.4

Source: International Labour Organisation's statistics and databases (ILOSTAT), labour force survey

¹ Statistical yearbook 2018, Egypt in figures 2019, Egypt census 2017

² CAPMAS, Egypt in figures: Population 2019, www.capmas.gov.eg/Pages/StaticPages.aspx?page_id=5035

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

	Low	Medium	High
2010	44	37.2	18.8
2014	44.3	37.6	18.1
2017	41.3	39.2	19.2

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

Source: ILOSTAT

TABLE 4. PARTICIPATION IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING (VET) (STUDENTS IN VOCATIONAL PROGRAMMES AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL UPPER SECONDARY STUDENTS)

	Upper secondary (ISCED 3) VET
2010	50.7
2014	46.6
2018	46.9

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

TABLE 5. SPENDING ON GENERAL EDUCATION AND VET

	Spending on ISCED 3–4 all education (including VET) as % of total public expenditure
2010	13.7
2013	15.6
2016	11.4

Source: Eurostat estimations

1.3 The VET system

Governance and management

In the last five years, VET governance has experienced a number of modifications that have influenced its institutional framework: termination of the Supreme Council for Human Resources Development; dissolution of the Enterprise TVET partnerships³ (ETPs) into industrial chambers of the Federation of Egyptian Industries, consolidation of the work of eight industrial ETPs into a single department, as well as the closure of local ETPs; and the establishment and termination of the Ministry of Technical Education.

The institutional framework remains highly fragmented, with a large number of stakeholders and institutions working autonomously on separate reform initiatives.

³ ETPs – a form of sectoral public-private partnership mechanism developed in 2007 by TVET 1 (an EU-funded project) to support a demand-driven reform in education and training; 12 ETPs have been established in sectors with economic development potential.

New bodies are being established. This includes four councils that aim to eliminate the fragmentation and build cohesion within the VET system: the National Human Resources Development Council, two executive councils, one for technical vocational education and training (TVET) and a second one for Workforce Skills, and a Regional Human Resource Council at governorate level, introduced in 2014. Preparatory work is ongoing to reignite cooperation between industry and training through the set-up of sector skills councils. These bodies are not yet active.

The VET system includes various levels: at the central level, a number of ministries are responsible for centrally administering VET provision. At the intermediate level, directorates at the governorate or regional level are currently acting on instructions and administering centrally made decisions and requirements.

Financing

There are four types of mechanism for VET financing: (1) public financing (by far the most important one); (2) funds generated through core activities; (3) enterprise financing; and (4) financing by international donors.

Expenditure planning for skills development is incremental (based on the previous year's expenditure) and does not incentivise performance or reflect enrolment and successful completion rates. The funding has limited integration with national economic or social goals and priorities; it is not directed towards the achievement of national goals or supporting a competitive sector. A high proportion of VET funding is spent on salaries, leaving few resources for investment in continuing professional development, for example.

The various VET subsystems develop and operate budgeting procedures according to their own traditions, and there is no overall rationale or prioritisation in relation to budget methodologies.

Regulatory frameworks

The VET regulatory framework is governed by a large number of laws as well as presidential, ministerial and prime ministerial decrees. The most important one remains Labour Law No 12 of 2003, which regulates vocational training, apprenticeships and occupational licensing.

A new Labour Law was drafted in 2016. It foresees the establishment of new governing bodies as mentioned above and sets up, among others, the basis for a National Training Fund to ensure the sustainability of TVET funding. This has not been adopted yet.

It is worth mentioning that Article 20 of the Egyptian constitution refers to VET.

In terms of strategic plans, the government has embarked on an ambitious reform towards Technical Education 2.0, aiming at a transformation of technical education through the following pillars: (1) transformed quality of technical education; (2) transformed relevance of technical education by transferring to competency-based curricula; (3) transformed teachers through training and qualifications; (4) transformed schools through employer engagement and work-based learning; and (5) transformed image of technical education through changing social perceptions. Quality assurance is expected to play a central role in this reform strategy, which is reflected in the foreseen setting up of a national entity for assuring overall quality of TVET at national level as well as the installation of a quality assurance unit within the Ministry of Education and Technical Education (MoETE).

Main provider institution types

TVET is mainly delivered by public institutions operating under different ministries and organisations both at pre-university and post-secondary level and more recently at university level through the new technological universities.

The providers include technical secondary schools, vocational education centres (administered by the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Transport, and others), technical colleges (administered by the Ministry of Higher Education), integrated technical education clusters (administered by the Education Development Fund), and vocational training centres (administered by the Ministry of Manpower and the Ministry of Housing as examples).

Training is mostly school-based, with one main exception being VET for the industrial sector. The training is offered through the Productivity and Vocational Training Department (41 VET centres and 46 training stations distributed over nine geographical zones) under the direct supervision of the Ministry of Trade and Industry. This training provision targets young people, typically at the age of 15, who have just completed preparatory education, offering a three-year programme leading to a vocational diploma. It is an apprenticeship programme.

Many work-based learning models have been piloted and the assessment of these initiatives have mostly been positive. Some of these have their own sustainability ensured through government funds. However, the scale of work-based education in TVET is still much lower than the government's aim. According to 2016 data from the MoETE, enrolment in work-based secondary education was around 2% (35 000 students in 2016). The target set by the MoETE is for an increase of 100 000 students each year in order to get to a 50% share of students in work-based learning by 2025.

Main provision/programme types

There are two main TVET programmes: technical secondary education and vocational education programmes.

- Technical secondary education is a formal education route for graduates of preparatory education, as an alternative track to general secondary education, and is delivered through three- and five-year programmes. Some of the schools are implementing the dual scheme, and studies at the recently introduced applied technology schools all lead to a technical diploma for technicians (the three-year programme) and an advanced technical diploma for senior technicians (the five-year programme).
- Vocational education programmes are offered through a number of ministries.

In addition to these two main programmes, there are eight regional technical colleges, including 45 middle technical institutions, administered by the Ministry of Higher Education.

Main qualifications according to ISCED levels

The main qualifications offered by the TVET system in Egypt are as follows:

- vocational preparatory: lasts three years and leads to an ISCED level 2 qualification;
- vocational secondary: lasts three years and leads to an ISCED level 3 qualification;
- technical secondary three-year programme: leads to an ISCED level 3 qualification;
- advanced technical secondary five-year programme: leads to an ISCED level 5 qualification (if a student chooses to stop after three years, they get an ISCED level 3 qualification);

- middle institutions/technical colleges/technological universities: two-year post-secondary non-tertiary education leading to an ISCED level 4 qualification;
- private higher institutions: four-year programmes leading to an ISCED level 5 qualification.

2. QUALITY ASSURANCE IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

2.1 Overview

The quality assurance system in Egypt is built around the accreditation of VET providers. The National Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education (NAQAAE) covering both general education and VET was established in 2006 for that purpose. To date, NAQAAE is legally the sole body responsible for accreditation of education including technical education. However, a new agency dedicated to VET is currently being established.

Data collection on labour market needs remains incomplete and a link between the data collected and TVET policy making is lacking. Data on TVET is provided by several bodies that relate to some of the EU Quality Assurance Reference Framework indicators. However, there is no evidence of the use of the data to increase TVET effectiveness.

In terms of the qualifications cycle, NAQAAE is mandated by law to guarantee the quality of qualifications. However, the absence of a clear governance model or a national process for developing qualifications based on learning outcomes and appropriate assessment are affecting the quality of the qualifications design.

The quality of VET teachers and trainers is facing a triple interconnected challenge: weak pre-service training, limited in-service professional development, and limited workplace experience. These quality concerns are further affected by the increasing number of teachers and trainers hired on the basis of non-permanent contracts.

2.2 General information on quality assurance at VET system level

The MoETE has responsibility for curriculum development, editing and printing books, examination and assessment, and application of regulations and laws for VET providers.

NAQAAE is the sole accrediting body for education and its main purpose is to support education/training institutions to develop quality and implement quality assurance measures. It is self-financed, mainly through fees for the accreditation procedure.

While universities manage the process internally, the MoETE's quality assurance division/units support pre-university education institutions, including TVET providers, in complying with the NAQAAE's quality assurance framework and gaining accreditation. Accreditation is mandatory by law for VET providers.

2.3 Quality assurance related to key VET areas

Evidence – statistics, and research and development

A comprehensive labour market information system does not yet exist in Egypt.

The main actors are the Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics (CAPMAS), the Information and Decision Support Centre (IDSC) and the Ministry of Planning.

To date, partial/separate data collection on labour market skills needs has included extensive sector-based analysis through separate projects; skills identification by curriculum committees; and the Egyptian Education, Training, and Employment Observatory's (EETEO) comprehensive information system on labour market skills demand/supply. Six regional labour market observatories, with four more planned, have been piloted. However, a link between the data collected and TVET policy making is lacking.

Data on TVET is provided by CAPMAS, the IDSC and the EETEO and includes participation in initial VET by gender/area; unemployment/employment by gender/education level; and teacher participation rates in in-service training. The data relates to some of the EU Quality Assurance Reference Framework indicators. The collected data is not analysed with a view to increasing TVET effectiveness.

Quality assurance and the qualifications cycle

The MoETE, with its relevant bodies and centres, is responsible for curriculum content. A competence-based curriculum model developed by the MoETE, with TVET-Egypt programme support, starting with the analysis of occupations, has been debated with a large group of stakeholders. Enhanced coordination among various international donor organisations resulted in a unified methodology for competency-based curriculum design, which has been reviewed by other supporting agencies. By the second half of 2019, the new approach had been rolled out for 13 industrial programmes, nine agricultural programmes, five commercial programmes and six tourism programmes and is being implemented in 105 technical schools.

The national core process, currently under development by the MoETE and the Ministry of Industry, will include an important role for employers in the definition of occupational standards, qualifications and curricula. However, it will be necessary to develop a single model that considers the National Skills Standards Programme where employers' organisations are already active, ideally via a formalised consultation such as through sector skills councils.

NAQAAE is the lead body for the national qualifications framework (NQF) which is at a preliminary stage and has no legal status to date. Implementation of the eight-level NQF, which covers the spectrum of TVET, is directly linked to adoption of an outcomes-based methodology.

NAQAAE is mandated by law to guarantee the quality of qualifications. Many elements are yet to be developed, including a clear governance model; a national process for developing learning outcomes-based qualifications; referencing qualifications to the NQF; appropriate assessment for outcomes-based learning; and a financial model for NQF work.

Quality assurance and VET provision/provider institutions

TVET providers have limited autonomy. NAQAAE supports training institutions to develop quality and quality assurance by preparing them for and granting them accreditation. The NAQAAE quality assurance framework addresses nine areas: vision and mission; leadership and governance; human and financial resources; civil society participation; quality improvement and accountability; learners; teachers; curriculum; and educational environment – with performance standards and indicators for each area, including for qualifications.

The number of VET institutions accredited since the establishment of NAQAAE is 86, in addition to 6 schools applying recently that are in the process of review or decision making. In total, the 92 reviewed technical schools represent 3.1% of all VET institutions.

In 2018, the government initiated the process to establish an Egyptian TVET Quality Assurance and Accreditation National (ETQAAN) Authority. So far, a draft law for the establishment of the Authority at central and regional levels has been developed and is awaiting approval by the Cabinet. The MoETE envisages that the establishment of the Authority will emphasise quality assurance for VET.

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

Teachers and trainers are civil servants and are subject to the same standards and procedures as other civil servants, hired on either permanent or temporary contracts. Some VET providers, however, also hire teachers and trainers as freelancers to deliver a certain number of lectures and/or workshops and are paid accordingly.

The quality of VET teachers and trainers is facing a triple interconnected challenge: weak pre-service training, limited in-service professional development, and limited workplace experience. These quality concerns are further affected by the increasing number of teachers and trainers hired on non-permanent contracts.

Several industrial education colleges offer four-year programmes to train TVET teachers. Systemic-level changes in teacher training have been achieved through the Teachers' Cadre and the Professional Academy for Teachers (PAT), both of which aim to provide frameworks for professional/career development. PAT teacher licensing criteria/regulations are used to recruit and promote teachers. However, licensing standards appear to have been weakened in recent times.

PAT has included knowledge of competence-based education in standards for certifying trainers. New pedagogic approaches have been successfully tested in pilot initiatives and the MoETE and PAT are discussing national up-scaling.

By 2016, PAT had trained 27 000 TVET teachers, a very small number compared to PAT's impact on general education. Moreover, it appears that TVET teachers receive less continuing professional development than general education teachers and that the Teachers' Cadre has less impact on teachers' careers in TVET than in general education.

Criteria/regulations for licensing training programmes are in place and all teacher training providers must be endorsed by PAT. Standards for trainers of teachers have been promulgated.

3. STRENGTHS, DEVELOPMENTS, NEEDS

New developments – in progress/in the pipeline

- A new Labour Law drafted by the Ministry of Manpower was submitted to parliament and is currently under discussion; once approved, it may be considered by the ministry as its VET policy framework. The draft law addresses a number of important issues, as well as the introduction of a Supreme Council for the Development of Human Skills and Resources (chaired by the prime minister) and the introduction of regional executive councils (at governorate level, chaired by governors).
- In 2018, the government initiated the process for the establishment of the Egyptian TVET Quality Assurance and Accreditation National Authority.
- The Technical and Vocational Education Teachers Academy (TVETA), in an attempt to introduce a world-class Training of Trainers Academy, has been established within the MoETE. TVETA is envisaged to offer training to technical education trainers, instructors, teachers, master trainers, assessors and verifiers. The MoETE is currently working on finalising the framework and guidelines for establishing the TVETA.
- A new law clarifying the mandate and operations of NAQAAE is awaiting approval in parliament.

Needs and challenges

Challenges in relation to improving quality assurance in TVET include the need to:

- address fragmentation of governance and institutional settings and strengthen the capacities of stakeholders as regards collaborative policy making/strategic planning;
- put the engagement of social partners, civil society and other stakeholders in decision making and financing on a formal footing;
- develop coherent demand and supply information management systems and strengthen information feedback for TVET improvement;
- establish a more unified framework, most likely through the NQF, for quality assurance qualifications and certification;
- continue to invest in raising and monitoring the capacities of TVET personnel.

4. GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

A systematic approach to teachers' accreditation and development

The Teachers' Cadre and PAT aim to enhance teachers' professionalism and provide a framework for continuing professional development. A new career development system has been created, linking salaries, incentives and promotions on a six-level seniority scale. Criteria and regulations for licensing teachers are used to recruit new teachers, and teachers need PAT accreditation for promotion. Criteria/regulations for licensing teacher training programmes and standards for licensing trainers of teachers have also been developed.

Quality Standards Framework

NAQAAE is supporting quality units at both the governorate and local levels to foster a quality culture and support institutions in the process of complying with NAQAAE accreditation. The NAQAAE's Quality Standards Framework has been assessed in line with international benchmarks.

LIST OF ACRONYMS

CAPMAS	Central Agency for Public Mobilisation and Statistics
EETEO	Egyptian Education, Training, and Employment Observatory
ETF	European Training Foundation
ETPs	Enterprise TVET partnerships
EU	European Union
IDSC	Information and Decision Support Centre
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
MoETE	Ministry of Education and Technical Education
NAQAAE	National Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation of Education
NQF	National qualifications framework
PAT	Professional Academy for Teachers
TVET	Technical vocational education and training
TVETA	Technical and Vocational Education Teachers Academy
VET	Vocational education and training

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