



A New Ecosystem

TVET, Skilling, and Employability



By Yvonne Helle

As global job markets are affected by accelerating changes that include technological advancements, the deployment of machines that take over the role of human beings, the revolution of artificial intelligence, and other developments, youth are challenged to receive quality education. They face difficulties on various fronts, especially in the least-developed countries, as they strive to equip themselves with the essential skills and competencies that are necessary to compete in the dynamic economic market. Youth struggle to find decent jobs that empower them or enable them to live in dignity and enhance their socio-economic situation.

The impact of the COVID-19 outbreak has further amplified these challenges and disparities. The pandemic has further stressed the increasing importance of life skills – to navigate anxiety and foster resilience and empathy among young people, to develop critical thinking skills in the context of the “infodemic” and fake news, and to build the self-learning and communication capacity of young people during times of remote and blended learning.

Youth unemployment in fragile economies remains one of the most significant challenges for policy makers as they strive to find proper solutions, and the gap between education and employment constitutes one of the trials that governments and their respective entities must address comprehensively and continuously. Investment in youth skilling is a fundamental strategy as governments tackle youth unemployment while catering to the emerging demands of the market to better engage youth in the economy.

Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is a potent foundational tool in efforts to secure youth skilling for decent employment.



TVET Summer Technology Camp with ITIQ in Sur Baher, Jerusalem. Photo courtesy of UNDP/PAPP.

In the State of Palestine, TVET is surrounded by social stigma, deemed the last resort for students who are not interested in pursuing an academic education, and considered a solution mainly for school dropouts. However, as dynamic changes are taking place in the Palestinian TVET system and new streams are launched, recently reaching 30 streams that aim to match graduates with market needs, social barriers are gradually beginning to fall, and the awareness of TVET’s potential is increasing. Supported by the international community, the Palestinian government has invested in new TVET schools for boys and girls in grades 10 to 12 and expanded historical schools across the different cities. The motivation of students enrolled in TVET institutions is increasing, and meeting them is an inspiring experience. Nowadays, TVET schools in the West Bank are

filled to capacity, and hundreds of students are on waiting lists.

The Palestinian TVET system is undergoing significant reform, and the establishment of the National TVET Commission marks an important milestone. The picture will not be complete without putting in place TVET financing. Multiple stakeholder partnerships are needed to effectively mobilise the needed investments. The commission has an ambitious vision. Its partnership with the private sector is a significant pillar in the strategy that aims to harmonize government policies for youth empowerment with educational offerings. Service providers are engaged in focused efforts to increase multiplier effects, enhance efficiency, and enable the better utilization of resources.

Despite the system’s success, external support for governmental TVET policies is urgently needed

to improve the quality of TVET education and solidify the bonds with local and regional market needs to enable Palestinian youth to enter the job market at different levels. Moreover, in order to institutionalize new TVET services, students are exposed to TVET, especially at the middle and high school levels. Students in grades 7 to 9 are taught about the opportunities inherent in TVET, while students in grade 10 are offered orientation sessions and career counseling. Efforts are being made to match the systemic development of educational content taught in schools to market changes. Moreover, TVET students are provided with mentorship and apprenticeship opportunities. Certainly, the current plan to establish Nablus University will allow students to continue their education at tertiary levels in order to upgrade their skills and competencies to be better prepared for employment and thus reinforce the education to employment nexus.

As part of supporting the national endeavors, UNDP – in partnership with the Government of Norway, Ministry of Education, and the National TVET Commission – has introduced a new ecosystem that aims to increase access to a conducive learning environment for TVET and enhance linkages between TVET and the labor market. This initiative was designed to focus on youth needs in East Jerusalem, improve TVET education for secondary students in the city, enhance technical and pedagogical skills of TVET teachers for targeted TVET schools, and foster employability and complementary skilling services for TVET students in partnership with the private sector.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aim to address the most pressing challenges facing people and the planet; to ensure a world free of poverty and capable of sustaining us all, by the year 2030. SDG 4 is set out to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities. On the other hand, the SDGs also commit to achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men through SDG8. Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is a critical building block towards reaching the SDGs .

Yvonne Helle was appointed as UNDP's Special Representative of the Administrator in September 2019. Prior to that, Yvonne temporarily managed the Sub Regional Facility for the Syrian Crisis in Amman, was Senior Country Director in Haiti, Deputy Resident Representative in Morocco, and Assistant Resident Representative for Governance in Laos. Yvonne started her UN career in 1992 as a Dutch JPO. She holds an MSc from the Agricultural University of Wageningen, the Netherlands, is married, and has two children.

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