

Supporting Vocational Education to Reduce Youth Migration



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Vocational education aims to provide students with theoretical and applied professional knowledge to prepare a specialized skilled workforce, supplying the various industrial, agricultural, and commercial production sectors, as well as the service sector, so that investment in education, particularly technical and vocational education (TVE), is the most promising investment for building a service and productive base that contributes to the decline in unemployment. The traditional view of vocational education as a refuge for repeaters and defaulters in public education or academic education has shifted in recent years, particularly in light of Lebanon's economic crises and the widespread need for professional services in a variety of fields, as well as the country's decline in interest in various productive sectors such as handicrafts, food, agriculture, and others.

According to 1997 statistics, there were 354 TVE institutes and schools, including 29 public schools, 13 of which were in Beirut (24,702 out of 37,570 students). The career orientation rate was 33.50%, with 61.83% technical degrees and 37.33% university degrees in the field.

The number of private schools providing the majority of TVE has decreased significantly, from 314 in 2013-2014, to 249 in 2014-2015, and 217 in 2015-2016.

On the contrary, the number of public schools and institutes increased from 53 in 2003 to 120 in 2008, and now (2022) 158, with the following distribution: Beirut 38 (and its suburbs), Mount Lebanon, North 53 (31+22 Akkar), Beqaa 38 (21+17 Baalbek-Hermel), South 11, Nabatiyeh 18. This reflects the government's interest in and expansion of TVE, as well as a shift in parents' and students' perceptions of the sector's importance and how to deal with it positively, particularly since Lebanon's economic crisis, particularly the rising unemployment rate, has encouraged this trend for years and indirectly. The first

is the lack of industrial specializations as a result of the lack of industrial economic institutions that require specialized labor, particularly since vocational education is not linked to an economic advancement plan. The second observation is that there is a growing demand for specializations in vocational education that do not require manual skills (accounting, commerce, etc.).

It should be noted that in 2002-2003, approximately 40,000 students at the primary and intermediate levels, and 5,000 at the secondary level, dropped out of general education. Out of 45,000 dropouts, approximately 15,000 have transferred to technical and vocational education (TVE), while the remaining 30,000 have entered the labor force without proper training. In 2015-2016, there were 75,691 TVE students, with 42,684 in the formal sector (56.4%) and 33,007 in the private sector (43.6%). It is worth noting that the number of students in the formal sector increased by about 6% between 2008 and 2016, while the number of students in the private sector decreased by 19.8%, resulting in a 7% decrease in the number of TVE students in Lebanon, for a variety of reasons, the most important and serious of which are intense competition from the expatriate foreign labor force (37.7% of graduates are unemployed), and the lack of conviction of many employers in their competence, and thus determining their wages as if they do not have TVE certificates! This is due, on the one hand, to the lack of protectionist control, and, on the other, to a lack of official educational promotion of the importance and necessity of this education. This explains the disparity in vocational education enrollment versus intermediate and secondary education. As a result, we see in many questionnaires that regret choosing vocational education accounted for approximately 17.7% of students, and this regret is attributed to a lack of sufficient skills for this education, which generated a strong desire to emigrate amounting to more than 80% and was accompanied by an unprecedented severe economic crisis that prompted many young people to consider emigrating.

► Distribution of Public and Private Vocational Education Students in the Lebanese Governorates

Percentage (%) of public TVE students distributed to Lebanon's governorates					
Governorate / Academic year	North Akkar	Mount Lebanon	Beqaa Baalbek -Hermel	Nabatiyeh	South
2015 – 2016 (45.28 F, 54.72 M)	36.79	21.63	20.64	12.18	8.76
2016 – 2017 (44.95 F, 55.05 M)	31.31	19.82	16.57	8.95	7.2
2017 – 2018 (45.50 F, 54.50 M)	21.79 14.38	21.78	11.67 11.02	10.06	9.31
2018 – 2019 (45.07 F, 54.93 M)	21.85 15.92	21.03	10.92 11.82	10.67	7.79
2019 – 2020 (44.41 F, 54.50 M)	21.5 16.6	21.6	10.7 11.8	10.2	7.6

Percentage (%) of private TVE students distributed to Lebanon's governorates						
Governorate / Academic year	North Akkar	Mount Lebanon	Beqaa Baalbek -Hermel	Nabatiyeh	South	Beirut
2015 – 2016	16.96	47.08	12.93	8.70	8.83	5.50
2016 – 2017	24.70	40.24	10.36	6.77	9.96	7.97
2017 – 2018	18.17 6.93	39.40	4.33 5.19	8.23	10.39	7.36
2018 – 2019	17.12 5.40	40.45	3.23 7.19	10.80	11.34	4.47
2019 – 2020	16.5 5.0	40.0	3.9 7.4	11.0	11.9	4.3

(The aforementioned figures are collected from the statistical bulletin released by the Educational Center for Research and Development, the latest of which was issued by the 2019-2020 bulletin.)

These facts and statistics lead us to believe that TVE is not for repeaters and defaulters, as some social and educational circles believe, but because Lebanon lacks a targeted strategy to transform itself into a productive country in need of more specialized labor in the various production and service sectors. Due to the lack of this plan, students' interest in moving into this sector falls, and the alternative is to consider emigration due to the blocking of the horizon of work in any of Lebanon's sectors, as well as the economic collapse that made living and employment conditions more difficult. Lebanon has abundant water, climate, and agricultural resources, allowing it to invest in a variety of businesses and agriculture that require qualified, trained, and productive labor. This is without mentioning trade and services, including tourism, which may all be performed and contributed to a considerable amount by the TVE sector for the socio-economic progress of Lebanon and minimizing talent and labor migration.

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