

Policy Paper

Overcoming socio-cultural barriers in choosing professional disciplines

Phenix Center for Economic and Informatics Studies

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Preface

The policy paper aims to present the variety of social and cultural barriers affecting youth's choice for their educational and professional paths. While Jordan continues to suffer from a high unemployment rate (19 percent in the fourth quarter of 2019), young people between the ages of 20 and 24 are the most affected group, with a registered rate of 39.7 percent.⁽¹⁾ Unemployment is particularly high among university graduates - 80.2 percent for females and 25.4 percent for males -, where young people continue to choose careers in traditionally prestigious sectors - such as medicine and engineering. Unfortunately, nowadays these sectors are oversaturated or semi-saturated, lacking the possibility to provide young graduates with adequate job opportunities.

While Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) can be an effective instrument to face this challenge, currently, less than 3.5 per cent of school graduates in Jordan choose vocational training programs ⁽²⁾. TVET has the potential to encourage young people to open up to new career perspectives and develop the necessary skills and knowledge required by the labour market, academic education is still linked to an idea of social prestige, TVET programs are deemed as second-class educational paths and a scarce portion of students enroll in these programs. Nonetheless, in contrary to university graduates, the unemployment rate among young people with a TVET degree is lower. According to own calculations of the ILO, 56.3 percent are economically active ⁽³⁾. Although the Kingdom launched several efforts to foster youth employment and empowerment as in the Jordanian National Charter of 1990 and the National Youth Strategy in 2005 and 2017, which both put a priority on the development and education of young people as major agents of economic and social development, youth unemployment remains a severe issue for Jordan hampering its full socio-economic development. ⁽⁴⁾

Phenix Center for Economics and Informatics Studies, through this policy paper, intends to contribute to the efforts aiming at combating the increasing youth unemployment in Jordan, uncovering the underlying causes of the socio-cultural barriers affecting their decisions for majors and future careers. Furthermore, the paper aims to provide alternative policies to solve the structural problems feeding into these socio-cultural barriers, promoting the development of practical training and TVET sector, decent work and youth empowerment.

Disclaimer


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1. Jordan Department of Statistics (2019, February) Unemployment report during the fourth Quarter of 2019.

2. UNESCO-UNEVOC (2019): TVET Country Profile. Jordan, p. 4.

3. OECD (2018): Youth Well-being Policy Review of Jordan (EU-OECD Youth Inclusion Project), p. 81.

4. *ibid.*, p. 17.




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Introduction

The factors affecting youth's choice for scientific and professional specializations are multifaceted and varied, and they feed into the increasing unemployment that Jordan has been suffering for years. While in the fourth quarter of 2018 the unemployment registered 18.7 percent - 25.7 percent for women and 16.9 percent for men, and 38.1 percent for young people -, during the fourth quarter of 2019 the unemployment rate reached 19 percent - 24.1 percent for women and 17.7 percent males, and 39.7 percent for young people. Survey's results show that the unemployment rate is especially high among the university degree holders by 25.2 percent compared with the other educational levels⁽⁵⁾. This is mostly due to the overwhelming majority of students choosing academic paths in the pursuit of careers in traditionally prestigious professions. Although careers in the field of medicine and engineering are desirable, «68% of university students [in Jordan] specialise in education, humanities and social sciences compared to 56% in Latin America and 54% in East Asia.» ⁽⁶⁾ However, these represent increasingly saturated sectors that lack the capability to absorb the growing share of young graduates.

Whether at the end of the primary or secondary education stage, students' decisions on their educational path are challenged by different barriers related to the availability of jobs in Jordan and the labor market's requirements, the increasingly saturated sector and professions, gender related factors, different options between office jobs and field work, manual or cognitive work, and other cognitive and skill learning.

While the socio-cultural barriers affecting youth's choice for majors and profession is multifaceted, it includes both structural problems - such as the lack of policies' implementation for an improved participation of youth in the labor market, the expansion of university education at the expense of intermediate and professional education, the underdevelopment of training programs and TVET centers, the lack of labor regulation and social protection for all sectors of the Jordanian economy - and social challenges - like family's influence and students' socio-economic background, gender barriers and stereotypes, society's negative view on manual work and vocational and intermediate education.



After the analysis of all these challenges, the policy paper presents a set of 13 recommendations to solve the structural problems feeding into these socio-cultural barriers affecting youth's choice for majors and future careers, promoting the development of practical training and TVET sector, decent work and youth empowerment.

Challenge

The ongoing increase in unemployment rates reached 19 percent in the fourth quarter of 2019, registering a rate of 39.7 percent among young people between the age of 20 - 24 years old. However, it is worth noting that the higher concentration of unemployment is among university degree holders, where the unemployment among graduates registered 80.2 percent for females and 25.4 percent for males.


These indicators are linked to the decline in the capabilities of the Jordanian economy to generate new job opportunities in recent years. Even though new jobs were registered during the year 2018, they amounted to approximately 38 thousand new job opportunities only, while around 120 thousand new graduates from various educational levels and specializations entered the Jordanian labor market. This constituted a tangible deterioration of the economic situation compared to ten years ago, where the labor market was producing nearly 70,000 jobs for almost 100,000 new graduates. However, the reasons for this extend beyond the weak capabilities of the national economy only. Other structural imbalances include education and work policies applied in Jordan, where in addition to approximately 400,000 Jordanians suffering from unemployment, there are approximately 900,000 migrants working in many sectors, of whom approximately 350,000 workers have formal work permits, while the others work irregularly.

Despite the prevalence of unemployment among university degree holders in Jordan, the number of students choosing the academic path still represent the overwhelming majority compared to those undertaking the technical and vocational education (TVET). The Department of Statistics in Jordan registered that in 2018, at the secondary education level, only 23,181 students (13,974 males and 9,207 females)(7) pursued the vocational curriculum, while the ones choosing the academic one were 177,945 (79,820 males and 98,125 females). Furthermore, every year approximately 120,000 students sit for the high school tawjihi exam; while approximately half of these students pass, about 45,000 of them enter Jordanian universities and only 6,000 go to community colleges (8). Not only there are way more students choosing university rather than vocational education (9), but also even when students choose TVET programmes, they use them as a stepping stone to join universities and not to work in the vocational sector.

7. Jordan Department of Statistics (2018): Jordan Statistical Yearbook 2018

8. Arabian Business Consultants for Development (2016): The Jordan STEM Education Landscape A Report for the British Council, 12.

9. Al-Tweissi A (2013). The Nature of Solutions Proposed to Promote the Social Image of VE from the Point of View of Experts in Jordan. *Dirasat Educ. Sci.* 40(2), pp. 14931510-.



The main factors that affect young people's decisions between vocational and university education are: structural problems of the TVET system itself which do not give the image of a reliable educational path, the low opinion of manual work, the clear separation between vocational education and academic education and socio-cultural norms on gender roles.(10)


The above-mentioned structural problems are reflected in youth's occupational status in Jordan, where huge gaps are registered between:

- the scarce generation of job opportunities in the Jordanian labor market and the increasing number of young people looking for jobs;
- the overwhelming portion of university graduates and related oversaturated job sectors.

- the students' education and the knowledge and skills required by the labor market.
- the number of university graduates and the number of students who pursued vocational education.

Many factors contributed to the emergence of these imbalances, including mechanisms in the education system in Jordan, whereby all students who fail to pass the basic education stage (the tenth grade) are directed to vocational education programs. Accordingly, social and cultural beliefs assigns an idea of prestige to academic education, where not only parents push for their children to undertake specific university disciplines or obtain a university degree in general, but also the vast majority of students passing the high school exam (Tawjihi) wishes to join the university education courses. While the Vocational and Technical Skill Development Commission does not perform an empowering role of support for young people, the number of universities and private institutes increases every year.

The expansion in the number of new private universities during the past three decades has been greatly encouraged. In addition, all public universities are directed towards parallel and parallel international education programs, which aim at reducing admission rates in some disciplines against higher fees paid by students and their families for other programs. This keeps deepening the educational gap between different programs, to the extent that currently in Jordan approximately 35 thousand students are in colleges compared to nearly 350 thousand in university education.



In relation to the severely high rates of unemployment, especially among young people and university students in particular, and the urgent need to reform policies that have created such imbalances, this policy paper addresses one of the factors contributing to the exacerbation of this problem, namely the cultural and social factors driving students towards university specializations that are not compatible with their passions and skills and do not match the job opportunities and requirements of the Jordanian labor market.

The problem

The problem analysed in this policy paper is the great weight that cultural and social factors play in pushing young people to choose academic educational specializations after the completion of primary and secondary education, without taking into account the actual demands and requirements of the labor market in Jordan, leading to increasingly severe unemployment rates among university graduates.

Analysis of the problem

The reasons for the emergence and worsening of this problem vary, but most of them are related to the policies pursued by successive governments. They can be summarised as follows:

1.Lack of policies' implementation in Jordan for an improved participation of youth in the labor market.

Policies in Jordan do not match the government's vision for an improved participation of youth in the labor market and better training and vocational education programs. The National Agenda and several other strategic plans - Education Strategic Plan for 20182022-of the Ministry of Education, Jordan Vision 2025, the National Employment Strategy and the National Strategy for Human Resource Development 20162025- - clearly focus on the increase of job opportunities and youth's participation in the labor market as part of future policies and plans in Jordan. Furthermore, these documents focus on the improvement of vocational education services in Jordan on the basis of national operational needs, promoting sectoral coordination with relevant ministries and business sectors. Nevertheless, the policies implemented so far do not align with the priority issues, failing to effectively tackle the problem of unemployment and youth's participation in the labor market, including the enhancement and promotion of VE programs in order to better meet the labor market's requirements.



2. Weak career guidance and counseling systems and programs

Among the shortcomings of the government's vision, the lack of structured and comprehensive career counseling systems and programs for all the schools of Jordan holds back the efforts to improve youth's participation in the labor market. According to the majority of experts in education and training unanimously interviewed for this paper, the Ministry of Education (MoE) provides extremely poor vocational guidance and counseling mechanisms and programs. Indeed, even though the MoE provides several vocational education programs, insufficient funding is allocated to the career counselling department. The latter disposes of only 5,000 JD for all the schools of the Kingdom (11) , severely hindering its role of guiding young people in entering the labor market. However, the reality of the situation indicates that counselling in schools is weak and the Ministry of Education should provide better services in this regard, especially aiming at contrasting the influence of prevailing social culture that favors academic education over vocational education, regardless of the labor market's demands and job availability.

3. The lack of adequate databases on employment trends in Jordan

Several European countries such as the Netherlands, Ireland, the United Kingdom, but also outside of Europe such as Canada, Japan or the USA, performing since decades national labour market forecasts which can sustainably improve the functionality of the market. Detailed estimates of the need for occupational groups and qualifications help decision-makers in deciding on policy measures and inform companies about possible skills shortages(12). This type of labour market forecasting model or data collection does not exist in Jordan. This lack of a national database on specializations and professions, and related skill requirements, hinders the full awareness necessary to young people to make a good choice for their professional future. While the government does not provide any such comprehensive information on the labor market status that can be public and available to everyone, databases that include complete and accurate information on job demand trends and job characteristics are few and usually available only to people involved in specific studies - as it was the case with sectoral studies issued by the Center for Human Resources Development several years ago. Only Jordanian civil societies developed a set of public websites that include information and details about employment trends in Jordan, along with job descriptions and related knowledge and skills required(13).

Additionally, some think tanks, independent institutions or international organisations publish estimates and studies on the employment trends in Jordan in irregular intervals. (14) Nonetheless, many of the publications are limited to specific target groups as refugees or women, and do not reflect labour market trends for Jordan as a whole.

11. Eng. Nidal Malkawi (2020, January): "Factors affecting the choice of specializations and professions" session in the conference "The Future of Economics and Jobs in Jordan". Presentation from the Ministry of Education.

12. Neugart, Michael and Klaus Schömann (2002): Employment outlooks: Why forecast the labour market and for whom?, in: WZB Discussion Paper.

13. see here, in example: <http://www.mehnety.net/> or <https://www.for9a.com/>

14. see, in example: Phenix Center (2016): Study: Employment Trends in Jordan 2016; USAID (2016): Labor Market Study Fresh Graduate Employment in the ICT Sector of Jordan; or WANA Institute (2018): Syrian Refugee Employment Trends in Jordan and Future Perspectives.

4. Family's influence and students' socio-economic background.

The lack of institutional counseling during the educational cycle leaves the family members as the main source of career guidance for young students concerned with the country's high level of unemployment (15) . Accordingly, students' socio-economic background is another crucial factor influencing young people's educational choice. This is a major determinant in the formation of opinions and attitudes of students, their parents and the community, towards educational paths and professions. Parents and peers' opinion have a great influence on the student's individual choice, and this is affected by the student's place of residence and environment, the local market's demands and job opportunities (16) . The family's socio-economic status itself often is linked with students' education choice, where the majority of vocational students comes from low and middle-class income families (17) . Accordingly, the desire to pursue a TVET degree seems higher for students whose fathers have low level of education, while those with high-skilled fathers are more likely to obtain university degrees (18) . These trends reflect cultural norms and values that continue to overestimate white-collar professions, while underestimating blue-collar job positions.

5. Lack of permeability between academic and vocational education.

Socio-cultural biases on the different educational tracks are also reinforced by admission criteria's systems and government's policy practices, which created a clear separation between the academic and vocational education paths. Indeed, another relevant reason why students rarely choose vocational education is that the education system in Jordan allows for little permeability. Those students who fail to pass the basic education stage (the tenth grade) are directed to vocational education programs, whether vocational institutes or vocational schools affiliated to the Ministry of Education. Furthermore, biased admission criteria for universities exclude vocational graduates, while the vocational stream of comprehensive secondary education does not directly qualify for university but it requires the completion of technical education(19) . This highly contributed to the stigmatizing of vocational education as a «failed» educational path, which led to students' reluctance to join these programs, where the significant weakness in the systems of vocational guidance and career guidance in the Ministry of Education contributed to the students' lack of clear vision on their educational options and future careers.

15. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): (2014). Labour market: the case of vocational training in Jordan.

16. Al-Sa'ad, A. (2007): Evaluation of students' attitudes towards vocational education in Jordan (Doctoral dissertation, Malmö högskola, Läraryttringen), p.109.

17. *ibid.*, p.104.

18. OECD 2018. 17. *ibid.*, p.104.

19. *ibid.*

6. Society's negative view on vocational and intermediate education

Among a variety of social and cultural factors affecting youth's choice for majors and professions, there is a common culture of prestige related to academic education, complemented by a general stigma towards vocational education as a lower status education. The Jordanian society's mainstream viewpoint on vocational training is based on the general culture that the government jobs and high-level jobs, such as doctors, engineers, lawyers, managers, and others, are considered to have a higher social position. Accordingly, the majority of people are directed towards university education since the early educational stages, i.e. the general secondary school is the most crucial stage in the path that leads to government employment and high-level jobs, where related high incomes for some workers in these positions have strengthened these social beliefs. A culture of shame affects the students' choice for future careers, where those who opt for professional education are considered to be those who failed the basic education, and those who enter middle community colleges are regarded as those who reached poor achievement in the high school exam. Consequently, the «stigmatizing» view over manual occupations includes that manual workers are the least educated, having no options to develop a career, low social position and poor financial income. Furthermore, the cheap labor force provided by the high levels of migration in Jordan - especially in construction, agriculture and manufacturing - lowered the wage levels for manual jobs and reinforced the 'culture of shame' around them(20). These factors motivated negative attitudes towards TVET which are reproduced by the unfair distribution of wealth and the system of social values based on it (21). This negative image appointed to vocational training and intermediate education has further pushed young people to pursue career paths in oversaturated sectors, leading to an increasingly severe unemployment among youth.

7. Gender barriers and stereotypes.

Gender is one of the main socio-cultural factors causing gaps and discrepancies not only in the distribution of young people between different educational paths, but also in the workforce in Jordan. At the secondary school level, females students represents on average 10 percent more than male students in the academic stream, while the latter are 20 percent more in the vocational one(22). This is reflected in the statistical data for under-graduate students (23), where women were still more than men (respectively 53 percent and 47 percent). Accordingly, from a study conducted in 2015, women motivated their choice for academic paths as related to the desire of self-actualization or the preference for jobs in the public sector (due to better wages and working conditions and higher social acceptability) (24). However, although there is no significant gap in the distribution of higher education between men and women, there are strong divergences on the female representation on the labour market: while 52.7 percent of women hold a masters degree, they represent only 17.7 percent of the employed population; in contrary, just 47.3 percent of men hold a masters degree by representing 59.4 percent of the workforce participation in Jordan (25). This is reflective of the various barriers and restrictions women are affected by, where marriage and childbirth represents the main reasons for leaving their jobs. Often the common belief that women's first responsibility is taking care of the house and the family retains many from entering the labor force.

8. The expansion of university education at the expense of intermediate and professional education

Over the past three decades, university education in Jordan expanded significantly, especially the number of private higher education increased in the course of extensive liberalisation efforts. (26) In the early 1990s, the state also allowed the foundation of private universities, which number has grown steadily since then. The rapid expansion of private universities is due in particular to the keen interest of Jordanians abroad who, on the one hand, had difficulty accommodating their children due to university quotas in the Gulf States, but also had the same problem in Jordan. Additionally, many Jordanians returned to Jordan after the 1991 Gulf War and increased investments in the area (27). Furthermore, due to their relaxed admission requirements, private universities offer the opportunity to study in a desired subject, even if one has been rejected by public universities (28). This expansion is carried on at the expense of the intermediate and professional institutes. While the number of universities reached 30, two thirds of them are private institutes that became a pole of attraction for all successful high school students. On the contrary, public universities suffered from a decline in government support, finding themselves compelled to establish parallel and parallel international education programs in order to face their financial deficits.

22. Jordan Department of Statistics (2018): Jordan Statistical Yearbook 2018

23. *ibid.*


24. Mehtap, S., Jayyousi, Y., Gammoh, N., & Al Haj, A. (2016): Factors Affecting Women's Participation in the Jordanian Workforce. *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, 6(10), p. 790.

25. Jordan Department of Statistics (2017): Graduates in Higher Studies; Department of Statistics (2018): Jordanian Women's Report on the occasion of the International Women's Day – Statistical Perspective.

26. Education International 6th World Congress (2011): Privatization of Vocational Education and Training: Major Trends and Impacts.

27. Grundmann, Johannes (2011): Islamismus, Bildung und Gesellschaft in Jordanien am Beispiel des privaten Hochschulwesens (unpublished doctoral dissertation), p. 164168-.

28. see Burke, Dolores and Ahmad Alwakad (1997): On the Threshold: Private Universities in Jordan, in: *International Higher Education* (9).




This further expanded the circle of those admitted to university education at the expense of medium and vocational education programs, contributing to the spread of the culture of prestige linked to university education. Finally, the promotion of new university institutes foster a further increase in the large share of young graduates which does not match the availability of jobs in the Jordanian labor market, further deepening the issues of youth's unemployment particularly high among university graduates.

9.Vocational training programs face a series of challenges in Jordan

Among the various challenges faced by vocational training programs in Jordan, there are lack of funding, lack of coordination with the industry sector and different practical aspects, like the insufficient number of facilities and trainers available. While some vocational education programs have been reviewed and redeveloped to align with international standards and best practices, new specializations should be created in order to reflect the needs and the skills required by the labor market. This not only requires studies to support and guide the creation of new programs, but also donors' funds to update community colleges facilities, labs and curricula. There are examples of success stories in this field, like Al-Balqa Applied University. This underwent substantial reforms that have been supported by the Ministry of Education and, with the National Strategy of 2017, 73 new vocational training programs were launched. Furthermore, there was an effort to review the curricula, as they were recognised to be too academic-oriented, in order to integrate them with soft skills, communication skills, technical specialization and 50 percent of practical training. While the culture of shame over vocational education still exists, the reality is that many of the students from Al-Balqa Applied University obtain contracts even before completing their studies.

10.Lack of labor regulation and social protection for all sectors of the Jordanian economy

Notwithstanding, the government's focus on the creation of job opportunities and youth's unemployment, there is a lack of a clear and comprehensive strategy to tackle these socio-economic issues. Despite the remarkable work of the National Agenda, no visible improvements can be recognised. While some measures target only specific areas with no strategy for the bigger picture, the lack of work regulations in place create an unsafe environment for workers.



Indeed, the widespread unregulated work gives space to violations of labor standards and disrespect of basic human rights, where the lack of regular contracts leave many workers without social protection and health insurance. Furthermore, the recent amendments to the Labor Law and the Social Protection Law negatively affect the status of human rights in Jordan, hindering the freedom of action of CSOs and Trade Unions, and allowing employers to partially register their employees in the social protection. In addition, the lack of gender-sensitive policies reinforces an unfriendly and often unsecure work environment for women, reflecting the low numbers of female workers in Jordan and preventing young girls from entering the labor market. Likewise, migrant workers often face different forms of discrimination in their work environments. Especially in fields like manufacturing, agriculture or tourism lack of legal protection regulations which prevents the implementation of a just decent working condition. For example, many migrant workers receive no compensation for overtime work, no protective measures or late payments. Furthermore, many refugee struggle with uncertain work perspectives due to short-term contracts(29). The poor working condition in some sectors due to the lack of regulations in place for the Jordanian labor market, creates an negative image for certain job and seem unattractive for young people that find themselves entering the labor market for the first time. In addition, it contributes significantly to the stigmatisation of certain professions and groups and thus prevents young people from choosing a career freely.


Alternative polices and Recommendations

In light of the above detailed analysis of the problem under discussion, a set of recommendations has been developed that we believe would be taken to contribute to overcoming the social and cultural barriers that prevent the bridging of the gap between labor market needs on the one hand and education policies on the other hand, which are as follows:

1. Political Decision-Makers

Update and implement the National Employment Strategy and the National Strategy for Human Resources Development, developing adequate policies in Jordan that concretely tackle the issue of unemployment and youth's participation in the labor market. The government must target the root causes of youth Alternative unemployment in Jordan, including the promotion of studies on the current status of the Jordanian labor market and its requirements, investing in counselling programs and jobs creation, improving the vocational education system and promoting its programs.

29. see ILO (2017): Migrant domestic and garment workers in Jordan: A baseline analysis of trafficking in persons and related laws and policies; and ILO (2017): A challenging market becomes more challenging: Jordanian workers, migrant workers and refugees in the Jordanian labour market.



National funding must be restructured and more resources must be allocated to develop and activate vocational guidance and counseling systems and programs.

Counselling should constitute an ongoing process that starts from the early stages of the student's life to help and encourage them to define themselves and their personalities physically, mentally, and emotionally. Students should be supported in matching their inclinations and desires with the educational opportunities available, developing their personalities in order to better determine their options, in addition to bridging the gap between jobs supply and demand in the labor market. Structured and comprehensive systems and programs of vocational guidance and counseling should offer young students innovative and updated services that support them in entering the world of work.

The work in all the sectors must be regulated in order to guarantee labor rights and social protection for all workers in Jordan.

The Labor Law and the Social Security Law must be amended in order to guarantee decent work conditions, safety and social security protection for all the workers. Regulatory policies must be developed and strictly implemented in every work place, in order to guarantee a favorable environment for young people to enter the labor market.

Gender-sensitive policies must be developed and implemented in every work place.

Policies that specifically assure safety and interests of women and young girls are necessary to guarantee a safe and friendly work environment for them. This is especially important within a labor market that registers a minority of women in the workplaces, like the Jordanian one, in which gender-sensitive policies have the potential to encourage a larger number of girls to enter the world of work.

Research and studies on the employment trends and promising sectors in Jordan should be developed in the view of the creation of a national database on the available job opportunities.

This information will be crucial not only in supporting young people in their academic and professional choice, but also in guiding the creation of new educational programs. Up-to-date data and information on the reality of the job market must be easily accessible and available to all, uploaded on a national online database that should include available job opportunities with related job descriptions.

The introduction of soft skills and digital skills as part of the general education is fundamental for young people to successfully enter the world of work.

Indeed, the labour market is changing and contemporary dynamics create new types of jobs far from old role models. Upscaling of workers' skills must be part of the new work development approach, where digital services represent the most promising sector for economic expansion. The Ministry of Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship is already working with both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Higher Education to introduce digital skills in the school curricula from the seventh grade.

2. Education Institutions of TVET and Higher Education, and Private Sector

The admission mechanisms for educational institutions should be amended in order to allow students to freely choose the option they prefer. Radically reconsider the admission mechanisms in universities, community colleges, vocational schools and vocational training institutes, so that they become dependent on students' inclinations and abilities, and not on their grades and academic achievement based on the traditional skills only prevailing in the educational system in Jordan. Furthermore, grants should be provided to students to complete their education in intermediate and professional tracks, while improving the content of the educational and training programs offered in order to encourage them to choose these educational paths.

Vocational schools must be updated with modern facilities, adequate equipment and labs. Indeed, vocational education programs usually require more specific equipment and facilities compared to academic educational programs. Accordingly, more funds and investments should be directed towards vocational school in order to provide the students with the technical skills required by the labor market.

An efficient coordination should be established between vocational schools and the labor market. Ongoing communications and partnerships between vocational programs and the business sector would improve the quality of education and the job opportunities offered to the students. Indeed, this would allow to align vocational programs and curricula with the labor market's requirements and the jobs available, while guaranteeing a faster job placement for the students.

The expansion of intermediate and professional education should be promoted in order to revert the current education model which is highly reliable on university education. The current model of education and training in Jordan depends mainly on university education. In order to review this model so that it relies more on intermediate education, the expansion of new community colleges and vocational and technical training institutes should be promoted, along with facilitating the access to it in terms of cost and location's distance.

Universities programs should include technical and vocational courses. The provision of technical and vocational courses within university programs would reduce the length of the waiting time between graduation and first employment, improving the students' flexibility and facilitating a faster entrance into the labor market. University programs should include various vocational and technical courses that the students can choose, treating them as a graduation requirements like other ordinary courses. The resulting skill-set acquired by the students will enable them to work in the related sectors after graduation, especially in case they struggle to find a specific job in their university major.




3. Civil Society and Public Organisations

Awareness campaigns must tackle the culture of shame over vocational education and inform about the current job market's requirements. Well developed and comprehensive awareness campaigns must include all areas in Jordan, aiming at the weakening of the culture of shame related to vocational education and manual work. Furthermore, awareness campaigns should mainstreaming the relevant information on the reality of the job market in Jordan both among students and their parents, business sectors and employers.

Increasing empowering opportunities for young people are crucial for them to discover their interests and how to match them with the appropriate job. Family's expectations, powerful role models, humanitarian intent, psycho-emotional health and gender are some of the many factors influencing young people's choices for specializations. Young people's empowerment play a crucial role within the discourse of youth's professional future, where the development of social skills and community engagement is crucial. Notwithstanding that the problem of youth's unemployment is structural and resides in the generation of jobs in Jordan - highly influenced by the expansion of the private sector -, youth's personal interest stands at the center of the solution. Students preferences and idiosyncratic abilities must shape their decision for their professional future.

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