Chapter 4. Creating a coherent and transparent vocational education and training system in Israel

The vocational system needs to be coherent, with clear relationships between different vocational education and training (VET) programmes, and clear routes of transfer and progression between vocational training and general education programmes. This allows individuals to make the right choice of educational path and helps employers to understand and relate to the different vocational programmes. This chapter argues that to make the system more coherent Israel should give consideration to the creation of a single strategic body that will plan and guide policy development on VET, and champion VET within government. A national qualification framework would also make the system more coherent and transparent. Israel may consider expanding and diversifying provision at post-secondary level, and promote pathways so that vocational choices are not dead ends.

The statistical data for Israel are supplied by and under the responsibility of the relevant Israeli authorities. The use of such data by the OECD is without prejudice to the status of the Golan Heights, East Jerusalem and Israeli settlements in the West Bank under the terms of international law.
Introduction: Why coherence and transparency matter

This chapter sets out practical steps for the implementation of reform

This chapter argues that action is needed at two different levels. First, the fragmented governance of the system needs be overhauled and simplified, by creating a single strategic body to plan and guide policy development on vocational education and training, to champion VET within government, and to realise a system capable of pursuing policy goals in a systematic and co-ordinated way. A national qualification framework would also make the system more coherent and transparent. Second, efforts are needed to expand and develop the post-secondary vocational system as an alternative to longer studies in academic universities, and to offer higher-level vocational programmes to which graduates of initial VET can naturally aspire.

A strong VET system needs to be coherent and transparent

A successful VET system needs strong individual vocational programmes. But such programmes, in isolation, are not enough. The vocational system also needs to be internally coherent, with clear relationships between different VET programmes, and clear routes of transfer and progression between vocational training and general education programmes. In addition, the vocational system needs to fit with wider social and economic requirements. This coherence and internal logic also need to be transparent to all the stakeholders in the system. That will allow individuals to make choices of relevant vocational programmes, with an eye not only on immediate outcomes, but also on progress from one programme to another and into the labour market. It will also help employers to understand and relate to the different vocational programmes.

Reform to improve coherence and transparency has proved difficult to implement

In Israel, there are large challenges to coherence, given the involvement of multiple government agencies in governance, variable levels of employer engagement, and little sense of a vocational pathway, in which vocational training becomes the entry point for further professional training and individual's career. These issues have been well recognised in Israel, as well as in the OECD's own review (Musset, Kuczera and Field, 2014). A recent report from the National Economic Council (2017) has also recommended several steps, including the systematic development of a qualifications framework, to enhance coherence. Steps are also being taken to relate the occupational certifications developed by the Ministry of Labour, Welfare and Social Services (MLWSS) to the school qualifications delivered in secondary schools under the Ministry of Education. But progress has been slow: while the need for more coherence is clear, making it happen is hard.

Policy option 4.1: Realising coherence in governance

To develop and bring to scale a high-quality VET system, Israel will need to gather information on skills needs, evaluate what is working well and what is not working well within the current system, engage with all the stakeholders, develop a longer-term plan for the development of the vocational system, and secure the required funding. Fragmented governance makes these tasks very difficult.

To drive reform and improve coherence and transparency, Israel may establish an overarching steering body for Israel's vocational education and training system. This body might be called the National Council for Vocational Education and Training.
The National Council should be established on a statutory basis, with its composition and responsibilities set out in law, so as to ensure its authority; it should have its own budget and secretariat; the Council should include representatives of employers, trade unions, government (including from the Ministry of Education and the MLWSS), vocational training institutions, minority groups and wider society.

The main responsibility of the National Council would be to guide the development of the vocational education and training system. To this end, it should:

- Publish a strategic (5-10 year) plan for the development and expansion of vocational education and training in Israel. This plan would be based on an assessment of emerging skills demands, and analysis of how those skills needs are to be met, and the steps which need to be taken by different ministries to meet those demands.

- Ensure that the different programmes and initiatives within the VET sector are evaluated, and publish an annual report, reporting on the contribution of the different elements of the VET system to the longer-term objectives, and making policy recommendations.

- Take direct charge of quality assurance and inspection of vocational provision, replacing the (duplicated and uncoordinated) separate arrangements currently in place. The National Council should also take responsibility for evaluating the quality of the system, and undertake research to this end, reporting this in its annual report.

- Take forward the recommendations of the report of the National Economic Council, guiding the development of a set of information tools to make the vocational system transparent to its users. Such tools would include relevant aspects of a national qualifications framework and strengthened outcome data.

**Policy arguments: The rationale for reform**

The vocational training system has to respond to the needs and interests of multiple stakeholders, employers in particular, as well as other labour market actors such as trade unions, so that training yields the right skills for employers, and supports individuals over a lifetime career. The engagement of employers ensures that the skillsets embodied in vocational qualifications reflect occupational needs, and that the mix of training provision between different occupations reflects the mix of demand for jobs of different types. At local level, good relationships between the vocational training system and employers help to facilitate work placements for vocational students. Looked at across countries, VET systems therefore maintain a diverse range of bodies to maintain these links at national, regional and sectoral levels.

At national level, overarching VET bodies engage the social partners, and typically serve the function of drawing together different government ministries with VET responsibilities.

**Policy argument 1: Fragmentation and overlapping responsibilities create inefficiencies**

*VET falls under the responsibility of different ministries*

Although responsibility for most adult vocational education and training rests with the MLWSS, responsibilities at upper-secondary and post-secondary level are shared...
between MLWSS and the Ministry of Education. Plans to consolidate all upper-secondary vocational schools under the Ministry of Education were dropped in 2016 (ETF, 2017). By law, students must be in classroom education up to the age of 18, unless (according to a special exemption) they enter schools supervised by the MLWSS. In addition, the ministries of health, tourism, and defence all have significant responsibilities in respect of training in their respective sectors (see Table 1.1). Division of responsibilities is a challenge if, as in Israel, different provisions duplicate each other and are poorly connected. One effect of such fragmentation is that many vocational programmes tend to be dead ends, receiving little recognition in the formal education system – for example when qualified practical engineers seek credit recognition on entry to higher education. Students moving across programmes run by various ministries may find it difficult to have their qualifications recognised and to build on knowledge and experience acquired previously.

**The demand for stronger co-ordination is long standing**

In Israel, the demand for better co-ordination of VET, and some overarching body to deliver that co-ordination, is long standing. Yair, Goldstein and Rotem, (2013) argued that the relationship between the two main ministries should be less competitive and more collaborative, while the State Comptroller of Israel (2010) describes the lack of co-operation between the two ministries as “severely dysfunctional”. The Harari commission (Karmi, 2004; Nathanson, Levy and Simanovsky (2010), and the Manufacturer’s Association (Lotan, 2010), have all argued for an overarching body to guide vocational education. The report of the German-Israeli Programme on Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training (Pur and Littig, 2017) also argued for a National Authority for VET, with sectoral and other subcommittees, which would operate under the direction of a National Council for VET. The OECD’s previous review recommended that Israel "establish a national body involving all the key stakeholders, include the ministries, employers and unions, to provide strategic guidance on the development of the VET system" (Musset, Kuczerwa and Field, 2014).

**But it has often foundered on the challenges of implementation**

For a mix of reasons, despite consensus on its necessity, a strong co-ordination body has not yet been established. Many different countries have co-ordination or consultative bodies of one sort or another for VET, but their value and efficacy is highly variable. Co-ordination bodies need something to co-ordinate, and consultative bodies need something to consult on, otherwise these bodies become empty talk shops. This suggests the need not only to establish a mechanism for strategic co-ordination, but also the need for a concrete work plan so its function will be clear, smoothing the path to implementation. The recommendations advanced here are designed to meet this objective. The German-Israeli Programme on Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training report, also set out some quite specific suggestions for the working of a co-ordination body and how it might be structured (Pur and Littig, 2017).

**Transferring responsibility for VET to a single Ministry would not solve the co-ordination problems**

Since the main responsibility for VET is shared within government by the MLWSS and the Ministry of Education, co-ordination challenges inevitably arise. One option would be to grant one or other Ministry full authority over vocational education and training at both upper-secondary and post-secondary levels. This would have some obvious attractions, as it would solve some problems of co-ordination, and remove some duplication. But
whatever the governance of the vocational education and training system, it needs to be effectively integrated into the education system, so that vocational options are taken seriously in primary and lower secondary schools, and so that vocational programmes allow transition into higher education. This means the close engagement of the Ministry of Education and the Council for Higher Education in Israel. Similarly, the vocational education and training system needs to be closely linked to the requirements of industry and employers, and the occupational examinations currently managed by the MLWSS. The implication is that, regardless of the precise allocation of Ministerial responsibilities, the VET system needs strong links both to the Ministry of Education and the MLWSS.

Policy argument 2. A National Council for VET would improve co-ordination in VET

A high-level overarching body in the area of VET is currently missing

In the light of these points, and consistently with many previous studies, this review proposes the establishment of a statutory body, to steer the development of vocational education and training in Israel. This body would be composed of representatives of employers and trade unions as well as government. The Council may also include representatives of the minority groups. Given the scale of entrenched co-ordination challenges in Israel, legislation is essential to establish the role of the National Council, so that its status as the coordinating body for VET becomes unchallengeable, and it has the authority to bring relevant stakeholders together to co-operate. The statutory responsibility of the body to report to the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) and make recommendations for any further legislative change would provide a powerful incentive for all the key stakeholders to co-operate informally within the framework provided by the body. Introduction of the proposed changes would require changes in the law. Drawing on previous Israeli experience this process can be challenging.

A longer-term strategic plan for the development of VET in Israel is important

There are a number of economic demands for skills. These include the need to replace the many technically trained immigrants from the former Soviet Union who are now reaching retirement age, specific needs to provide appropriate training and education for those groups with low rates of economic activity, including the Haredi male and Arab female populations. Other new demands are emerging from the changing shape of Israel’s economy. All of these demands need to be quantified, and set against the current and expected future capacity of the vocational training system. This process will help to establish an assessment of the technical and vocational skills which will be required in coming years, and underpin strategic proposals by the National Council for how the vocational system should be developed to meet those needs.

Quality assurance is awkwardly duplicated by the two main ministries

High-level quality assurance is provided by the two main ministries, of education and MLWSS in respect of ‘their’ schools, currently through two separate inspectorates reporting in parallel. To facilitate convergence in the relevant programmes, and to improve efficiency, it is proposed that the high-level quality assurance should be brought together in a single Inspectorate of vocational education and training programmes under the proposed National Council. A significant part of quality assurance is offered by the school networks themselves and municipal authorities. But quality assurance at the practical level of inspection of teaching and institutions needs to be backed by analysis and evaluation of programmes and policies, and placed in a broader context of wider
objectives for the vocational training system. Similarly, analytical research on programmes and policies can be informed by the practical experience of inspectors in schools and colleges. For these reasons it makes good sense to bring both functions under the authority of the National Council. This will also help to ensure convergence and co-ordination of the programmes under the two ministries, as well as creating efficiencies through economies of scale.

**Policy argument 3. The national qualifications framework would increases clarity and remove duplications**

Establishment of the qualification framework is in line with recommendations of the National Economic Council of Israel

The development of a national qualifications framework was recommended in a previous OECD report (Musset, Kuczera and Field 2014), more recently reinforced by, for example a recent report by the European Training Fund (2017), and by the German-Israeli Programme on Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training (Pur and Littig, 2017) recommendation for a unified certificate system, linked to the European Qualifications Framework. These recommendations are now being taken forward through the work of an Inter-Ministerial committee under the National Economic Council. The National Economic Council report argues that a national qualifications framework now needs to be established, which maps and ranks all national diplomas given in the education and training system of Israel. The aspiration is ambitious, going beyond mere linear ranking of qualifications. The aim is a system which reflects the value of the qualifications, their weight as part of continuing studies and training, and their potential for mobility within and between the professional technological and academic tracks. More specifically, this will involve measures to seek convergence between the Ministry of Education technological tracks and vocational certificates awarded by the MLWSS so that graduates from the technological tracks can also receive vocational certificates. This objective can only be reached if there is a co-operation between the two ministries. Increasing the value of qualifications will also require recognition of training in the IDF to support the further education and training of discharged soldiers and course exemptions for practical engineers wishing to progress into higher education (National Economic Council, 2016). These are commendable objectives.

Many countries have established qualifications frameworks to make the system more transparent

The challenges faced in Israel are not uncommon. VET systems and associated qualifications are often partly managed by a Ministry with education responsibilities, and partly by a Ministry with labour market responsibilities. One effect is that, as in Israel, there are sometimes competing systems of qualification. To address this challenge and to make the system more transparent many countries around the world have introduced, or are introducing national qualifications frameworks. When they encompass both vocational and general education (including higher education), such frameworks can allow vocational and general tracks to grant qualifications that are at the same ‘level’ within the framework (CEDEFOP, 2016). But many barriers remain, often because National Qualification Frameworks (NQFs) can sometimes formalise barriers between vocational and academic programmes. While frameworks can be helpful in promoting system transparency, they should not be expected to achieve miracles on their own. In practice, in Israel as in other countries, much will depend not just on the qualifications framework, but also on how the qualifications are related to one another and whether they
are meaningful to employers and individuals. The National Economic Council is therefore right to set its sights on methods of mutual recognition of qualifications, which will allow, on a case by case basis, for this to take place.

**Policy argument 4. Better data would support a coherent and transparent system**

*Disparate sources of data on VET and its outcomes are not brought together*

While various data are available in Israel on the labour market outcomes of VET programmes, these data are not adequately collated and utilised either for the purposes of policy making, operational planning, or for guiding the careers of individuals. ETF (2017) point out that the data sources and surveys are fragmented around different agencies, including the responsible ministries, the Central Bureau of Statistics and the Manufacturing Association. They include labour force surveys, surveys of employer needs, but there is no "system capable of making useful labour market information available to education and training planners" (ETF, 2017). Similarly Pur and Littig (2017) argue that data collection and analysis needs to be much better co-ordinated. One role of the National Council, recommended above, would therefore be to co-ordinate data collection on VET. Israel benefits from having a strong research capacity and many good analysts, able to draw conclusions from these data; but to this end the data need initially to be brought together.

*Reliable and timely data support evaluation culture*

Better data, collated and analysed systematically, should also help to establish an evaluation culture that should underpin the development of VET. While this report recommends the expansion of VET in Israel on strategic grounds, it should not be done without care, but in a way which respects evidence on whether specific programmes can provide the skills needed by Israel's economy, and improve the life chances of those who graduate. Currently, evaluation is limited, and more systematic co-ordination is required to answer key policy questions. For example, it is very important to know what the relative strengths and weaknesses are of the full apprenticeship programme at upper-secondary level run by the MLWSS, and the one day a week work placement for students in technological programmes managed by the Ministry of Education.

**Policy option 4.2: Developing post-secondary options**

As argued in Chapter 2, the current system works well for students following prestigious technological programmes and demand of high-level skills in Israel is growing. As a result, upper-secondary vocational training in the form of apprenticeships may expand somewhat, but is not likely to be an option for a large proportion of the cohort. More academically demanding technological sub-tracks will remain more academic, and will not make school-leavers job-ready in respect of individual jobs or careers. While upper-secondary VET programmes can and should be constructively developed, much of the burden of expanding vocational education and training will therefore fall on post-secondary programmes.

In Israel many young people fail to obtain the Bagrut and many do not enter higher education. The offer for these young people is currently weak. Israel's economic performance, and social cohesion depends on giving these young people relevant working skills and integrating them into the labour market. Israel may consider expanding and
diversifying provision at post-secondary level, and promote pathways so that vocational choices are not dead ends. This implies action at three levels:

- The offer of short post-secondary vocational programmes needs to be diversified and expanded, and funded on the same basis as higher education in the interests of both efficiency and fairness.

- A strengthened institutional foundation should be established by promoting much fuller co-operation between the technical and academic colleges, and in some cases mergers. This co-operation should be used to diversify the offer of one and two-year post-secondary vocational programmes beyond the current technical areas.

- To secure the status of post-secondary vocational programmes, and to meet skill needs, these programmes need to sustain the option of subsequent progression to higher education.

**Policy arguments: The rationale for reform**

Globally, developed countries display a growing demand for post-secondary vocational qualifications, with some advanced countries graduating 20-30% of the cohort at this level (OECD, 2014). There is nothing in Israel on the demand side that could explain the small size of this sector. The strong labour market demand for skills associated with a wave of retirements affecting the migrants who came from the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, and typically entered higher-level technical jobs, create a historic opportunity to promote post-secondary VET. In the previous OECD review, Musset, Field and Kuczera (2014) identified two key factors deterring people from entering vocational programmes — first, vocational tracks at upper-secondary level are often dead ends, with very limited options for progress to higher-level programmes, and second, there are large barriers in transitioning from practical engineering programmes to higher education. It recommended steps to improve the access of upper-secondary VET graduates to further learning opportunities, including post-secondary VET; and enhance access to universities and credit recognition for graduates of practical engineering programmes. Building on these recommendations, the National Economic Council (2016) proposes a 'continuum of advanced studies' for practical engineers. Pur and Littig (2017) propose the creation of a set of higher-level qualifications for graduate apprentices, including the equivalent of a German Meister qualification (equivalent of a post-secondary qualification). This review seeks to build on previous work, and present suggestions for the further development of post-secondary vocational programmes in Israel.

**There are multiple barriers to expansion of post-secondary VET**

A number of barriers fall between the set of programmes and institutions providing technician and practical engineering programmes on the one hand, and higher education in academic colleges on the other. First, governance: the technical colleges fall mainly under the authority of the MLWSS, while the academic colleges are accredited by the Council for Higher Education in Israel. Consequently, only the academic colleges are 'higher' education, and use the terminology of 'academic' education. Second, funding: academic colleges and universities are funded much more generously. Third, coverage: many fields of study are not at present available in the practical engineering and technician programmes. Fourth, progression: as described in Musset, Field and Kückler (2014), progression from practical engineering and technician programmes to bachelors’ programmes in universities, and obtaining credit for what has already been learnt, is
fraught with difficulty. These factors provide a highly effective means of institutionalising an artificial divide, and with it the low status of the practical engineering and technician programmes. These specific points are addressed in more detail below.

**Policy argument 1. Post-secondary VET is not part to the higher education system**

**Israel currently maintains two ‘college’ systems in parallel**

As described in Chapter 1, 70 technical colleges currently provide two-year practical engineering and one-year technician programmes to around 13,000 students while 37 ‘academic’ colleges, and 21 academic teacher-training colleges provide bachelor’s level and some masters programmes to around 100,000 students. A very few colleges – for example the ORT Braude College of Engineering - provide both types of programme, but this is the exception to the rule – despite the fact that many of the academic colleges deliver technical programmes and both types of college are in the business of providing post-secondary education in technical and professional areas.

**Much stronger collaboration between the two college sectors is needed**

Standing back from the specifics, there are, as argued above, grounds for believing that Israel needs a revitalised post-secondary sector, with a range of short vocational programmes, and not just in the technical areas which currently dominate provision in practical engineering and technician programmes. Developing such programmes will require much more effective co-operation between the two 'college' sectors. Currently, the academic colleges provide programmes in subjects such as art and design, communication, business administration, law, and tourism areas where there is much scope for shorter vocational programmes, and, as argued above, for certain jobs, there is no need for a full bachelor's programme. Developing programmes in these areas will naturally involve drawing on the expertise of the existing academic colleges, and in some areas, much fuller co-operation between the sectors. It will also facilitate credit recognition, for example when a graduate of a one or two-year programme wishes to continue their studies and complete a bachelor's degree. In some areas, it may make sense to merge the functions, as in community colleges in the United States (see Box 4.1).

**Box 4.1. Community colleges in the United States**

Community colleges in the United States bring together two functions, associated with two different lines of historical development. One was the early 20th century growth of “junior colleges,” designed to provide students with the first two years of a bachelor’s degree education, leaving universities to focus on the more rigorous last two years. The second was the establishment of two-year technical institutes designed for post-high-school vocational preparation. Some institutions specialise in one or other function, but most community colleges deliver both.

Community colleges typically serve multiple missions, including preparation for 4-year education, workforce development, and adult basic education. In addition to VET, their offerings typically include non-credit courses and community services, non-credit federally
supported workforce training, remedial education, fine and cultural arts, and general education and transfer courses. But both within and across states, community colleges vary widely in their focus on these goals. About 80% of community college students are enrolled to earn an associate’s degree, with about 10% seeking a certificate, and another 10% not seeking a credential.

Community colleges tend to be adaptable institutions, which makes it easy for them to respond to local education and training needs, but at the cost of having their mission under constant scrutiny and subject to change. Although most analysts credit the community college with playing a vital role in increasing access to post-secondary education, providing valuable workforce training opportunities, and serving local needs for a variety of adult learning activities, these institutions have historically been viewed as “lower tier”. In part, some of this image problem may stem from community colleges historical roots as “junior” colleges. But they are also less “prestigious” by design—they have open admissions, educate students who lack basic educational or occupational skills or are otherwise not prepared for 4-year college, focus on teaching rather than research, and award primarily sub-baccalaureate credentials.

There are high rates of drop-out, but even those who drop out often seem to get some returns from their studies, and those who do graduate with a two-year associates degree or a shorter certificate earn 10-20% more than those with no post-secondary education.


Policy argument 2. Post-secondary vocational programmes are much less generously funded than higher education

Given the objective of expanding the post-secondary offer, the first step is to ensure that vocational post-secondary programmes are in a position to compete fairly with higher education. Currently, total expenditure, per student year, for higher education college engineering students is much higher than expenditure for practical engineering and technician students in MLWSS institutions (see Table 4.1). The government contribution to those costs is more than three times higher in college engineering degrees. The implication is that teaching intensity and quality is likely to be better in college programmes. These are large differences, so students and their parents will nearly always prefer full bachelors' degrees, regardless of other considerations. The Manufacturing Association has argued that the expansion of academic colleges has creamed off most of the available talent (National Economic Council, 2016). The current funding arrangements also mean that when credit recognition for practical engineering programmes is sought for those who wish to progress to a bachelor's degree, academic...
colleges and universities have grounds for believing that the quality of tuition received in those programmes is not at the level of much better resourced higher education programmes.

**Table 4.1. Funding of practical engineering and technician programmes and ‘academic’ engineers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programme Description</th>
<th>Government funding</th>
<th>Tuition fees</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practical engineering and technicians in technical colleges (MLWSS)</td>
<td>9,900</td>
<td>6,960</td>
<td>16,860</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical engineering (MoE)</td>
<td>19,500</td>
<td>6,479</td>
<td>25,997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education College degree in engineering</td>
<td>34,300</td>
<td>10,066</td>
<td>44,366</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


This imbalance in funding needs to be resolved on grounds both of efficiency and equity

Efficiency requires students to choose the right programme option for their needs, and skills needs in the economy will require some post-secondary graduates with one year of post-secondary studies, some with two years and some with more. But the current framework wastefully shoehorns all but those lacking required prior qualifications (full matriculation) into bachelor programmes. Given that those without the prior qualifications required for higher education are often more disadvantaged, this also acts to magnify education inequity by offering weakly funded programmes to the most disadvantaged. This distortion creates large economic costs.

**Substantial investment in post-secondary vocational training is needed**

The distortion should be resolved by investing in the quality of practical engineering and technician programmes, substantially increasing yearly expenditure per student to approach the levels of higher education. This should increase the economic efficiency and equity of the post-secondary system. The direct public expenditure costs of the additional expenditure on practical engineering and technician programmes will be offset by encouraging more young people to choose shorter post-secondary programmes rather than bachelors programmes, thus saving public money. Given that there are around 100,000 students in academic colleges, and around 13,000 students currently in practical engineering and technician programmes, the diversion of just a small proportion of those 100,000 students into shorter programmes would create substantial savings. Moreover, for those diverted, there would also be large savings to individuals both in reduced tuition costs, and reduced opportunity costs, since they would enter the labour market one year earlier. The aim is not to reduce course length simply because of the savings involved, but to create a level playing field in which individuals can make efficient decisions about the right type of course for them, without the current very artificial incentives to choose a bachelor's programme.

**Policy argument 3. Vocational post-secondary programmes are only provided in technical fields**

More appropriate funding would also provide a strong foundation for extending the one and two-year model to a wider range of fields of study, not just the technical fields currently pursued in practical engineering and technician programmes and to provide higher-level programmes to apprentices. Many countries maintain a wide range of short
post-secondary programmes in fields such as business, legal studies, tourism and in paramedical occupations. This point is considered further below.

**Policy argument 4. Transition from post-secondary programme to into higher education is difficult**

*The aspiration to enter higher education is widespread*

In Israel, as in many OECD countries, increasing numbers of young people aspire to higher education. This reflects increased ambitions among young people, labour market demand for higher-level skills and a need to upskill and reskill throughout life. In response, many young people seek the most direct route to higher education via academic upper-secondary education. Some technological programmes also prepare effectively students for higher education studies, as discussed in Chapter 2. But others, for multiple reasons, may pursue low-level technological programmes and apprenticeships, without necessarily abandoning this aspiration. The implication is that it will be extremely important to establish a clear pathway from VET to post-secondary vocational education and from post-secondary vocational programmes to higher education as a means of meeting student aspirations, and removing any perception of VET tracks as dead ends. Such pathways will help to meet growing economic demands for higher-level skills, support lifelong learning, and promote social inclusion and mobility, by opening up opportunities for higher education to a wider group of people, including the most disadvantaged.

*Higher education entrants may come from upper-secondary or post-secondary vocational programmes*

The importance of pathways to higher education is widely recognised in Israel, and the 2016 National Economic Council report gives much emphasis to their development. There are two main pathways to higher education at issue: from upper-secondary education; and from post-secondary vocational programmes (such as technician and practical engineering). In Israel, the key issue is transition from youth apprenticeship programmes to higher education and transition and recognition when graduates of practical engineering and technician programmes seek entry to higher education. The first point was addressed in Chapter 2, and this chapter focuses on the last challenge – transition from post-secondary VET to higher education. The challenge in Israel is echoed in many countries, where post-secondary vocational programmes seek recognition for their graduates when entering higher education. Individual vocational institutions can establish bilateral agreements with other education institutions, with rights of access and credit recognition for their graduates. While these bilateral arrangements are relatively common, they consume much administrative energy. Sometimes a national or regional system can facilitate pathways, given the commitment of the participant institutions. In England (United Kingdom), the Skills for Sustainable Communities Lifelong Learning Network established more than 300 progression agreements, mostly between vocational further education colleges and higher education institutions (McKee, n.d.). In Japan, a credit transfer programme encourages universities and junior colleges to exchange credits with professional training colleges (Sawano, 2015). The previous OECD report focusing on post-secondary VET in Israel discussed this issue in detail and provided policy options to tackle it (Musset, Field and Kuczera, 2014).
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