

State of **SKILLS**



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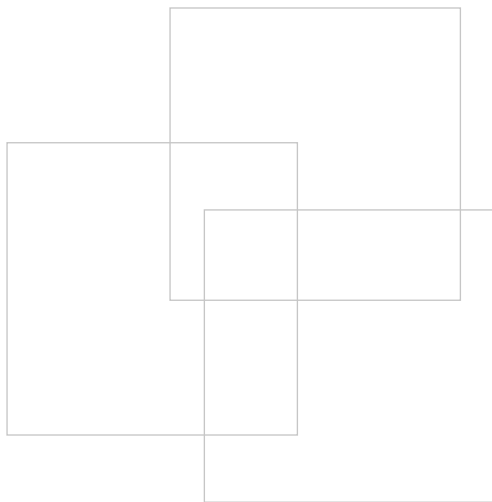
1919-2019



Mauritania

State of

SKILLS



Mauritania

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The socio-economic context

Over the past few years, skills development has become a policy priority in Mauritania.

Several laws and decrees have been adopted to define the legislative framework for technical and vocational education and training (TVET). The adoption of the Technical and Vocational Training Strategy (2010 - 2020) has opened the way for better supervision and governance of the TVET system. However, this system still faces major challenges due to the mismatch between the training provided and the skills required by the labour market, the limited development of workplace training, the limited role of the private sector in TVET governance, and the lack of financial, human and material resources.

Mauritania is characterized by a significant informal sector and a high unemployment rate among young people, women and in urban areas.

The rate of growth of the economy has been increasing steadily since 2015, reaching 3.6% in 2018. This increase was helped by structural reforms and good performance in the telecommunications, transport, electricity, irrigated agriculture and manufacturing sectors. Another significant feature of Mauritania's economy is the large place of the tertiary sector, which accounts for about 38% of GDP.

The Mauritanian labour market is characterized by the dominance of the informal sector and a mismatch between the training on offer and the skills required.

The working-age population amounts for over half (52.7%) of the country's total population (ENE-SI, 2017). It comprises a high proportion of young people and women, with 61.4% under 35 years of age and 57.5% women. Employment stood at 734,000 people in 2017, 38.5% of which are women and 63.3% aged 25 to 49. This translates into an employment rate of 36.6%, which means that almost two-thirds of the working-age population do not participate directly in the country's economic activity. This is partly due to the low level of female participation: in 2017, the female labour force participation rate stood at 28.2% compared to 59.6% for men.

The informal sector is the major source of job creation.

It employs more than 56% of the working population, nearly 37% of which have jobs in the informal non-agricultural sector. Jobs that are defined as informal are generally low paid and precarious. According to the 2017 ENE-SI survey, the informal employment rate in the private non-agricultural sector stands at 91.1%, a fall of about five percentage points compared to the 2012 rate.

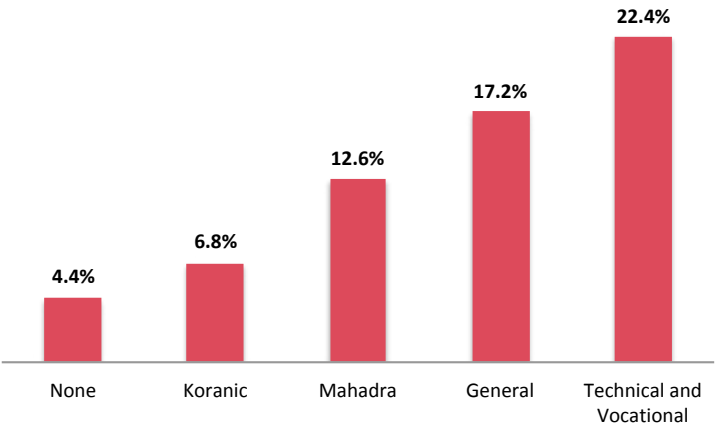
At the sectoral level, services remain the main source of employment in Mauritania.

In 2017, this sector accounted for 50 per cent of employment, followed by agriculture (30%) and industry (14%). In terms of job creation, it should be noted that agriculture and fisheries are the sectors that generate most jobs and promote inclusive or shared growth. However, these two sectors continue to be hindered by several factors, including limited use of potential irrigable areas, very poor performance of agricultural development programmes, barriers to land access for women, weather conditions, low productivity, etc. Other sectors are also significant sources of growth and job creation opportunities in Mauritania, particularly manufacturing, construction and services.

The overall unemployment rate was estimated at 11.8% in 2017; it is relatively high among young people, women and in urban areas.

While in most developed countries, a high level of education provides good protection against unemployment, in Mauritania the situation is reversed: the unemployment rate increases with the education level, particularly in urban areas. This observation exposes the significant gap between the training on offer and the skills and job requirements. It is a major obstacle to the entry and transition of young people into working life. It is partly due to the education and TVET systems.

Figure 1. Unemployment rate by level of education.

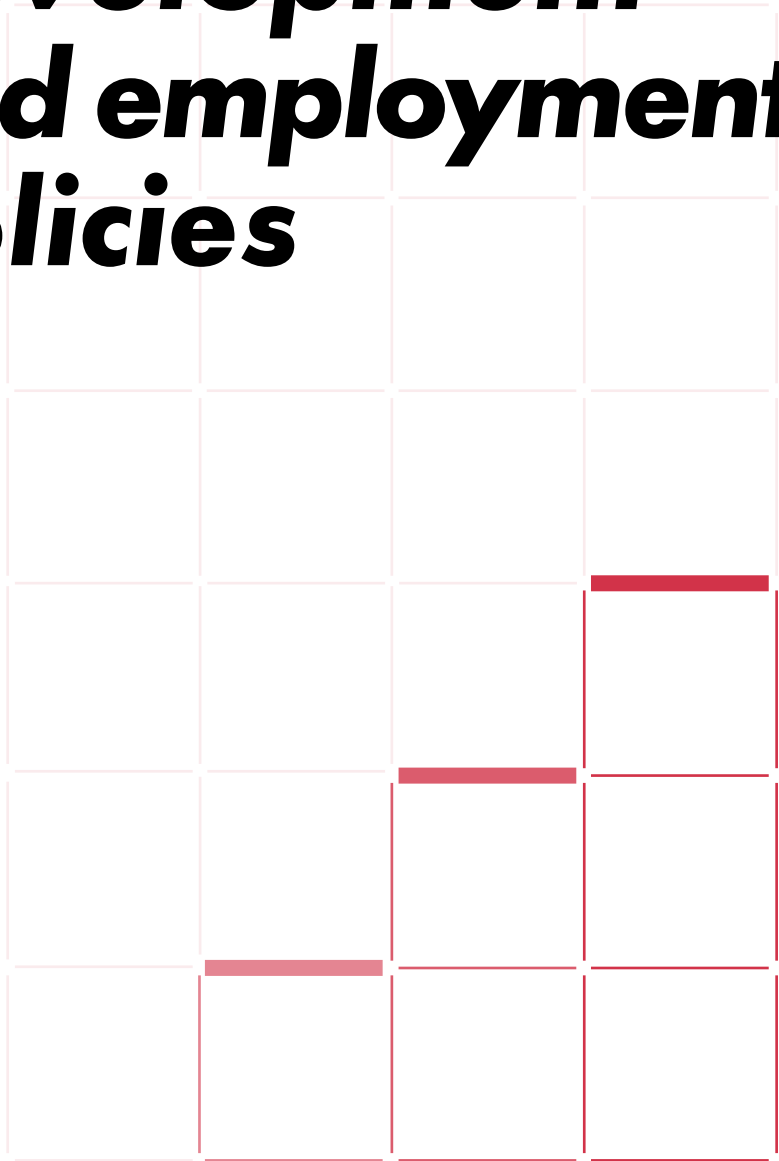


Source: Prepared by the author based on ENE-SI 2017 data.

People with low levels of education, especially in rural areas, often have no job security.

Almost a quarter of the working population (23.3%) have received no education and 26.3% have attended Koranic teaching only. Another half of the working population has attended modern general, technical or vocational education, among which only 6% to tertiary level and only 0.7% as technical or vocational training. Precarious jobs (casual, temporary or seasonal) are held by 20.1% of the workforce. This proportion is relatively high in rural areas, with 33.7% compared with only 13.2% in urban areas.

Development and employment policies



It must be noted that Mauritania has made significant efforts in recent years to develop employment and facilitate the access of young people to the job market. Besides the impact of sustained economic growth, the efforts have focused on developing employment strategies, setting up dedicated structures, developing appropriate tools and approaches and implementing employment promotion programmes. In this context, the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training plays a central role in the design and implementation of employment policies and programmes as well as those that provide statistical information on employment. One of the main tasks of this Ministry is to promote better coordination of governmental policies in order to address the challenges and obstacles facing the employment sector.

Like several African countries, Mauritania has for several years placed the employment issue at the heart of reforms and strategies on economic and social development. It is viewed as a lever to reduce poverty and integrated as a strategic objective in all structural programmes implemented by the State. To this end, several projects and programmes have been set up to strengthen the capacity of the main economic actors and generate more jobs in terms of quantity and quality.

They include the National Programme for the Integration and Support of Micro and Small Businesses under the Department for the Promotion of Microfinance and Job Market Access, the Support Programme for SMEs run by the Chamber of Commerce, the creation of the National Agency for the Development of Youth Employment (ANAPEJ), the Support Centres for the Employment and Social Integration of Young People, etc.

In order to support the major changes that the country has experienced in recent years as a result of socio-economic transformation and strong population growth, in 2015 Mauritania launched a process to develop a national employment strategy and started to implement an effective labour and training market information system. This process basically comprises an assessment of the national bodies and structures that produce and use employment statistics and improvements to the labour market information system.

The vision behind this strategy is to reduce quantitative and qualitative employment shortages by achieving a set of strategic objectives aimed at stimulating decent and productive employment. These objectives are mainly organized around four strategic pillars: (i) formulate a national employment policy (NEP) and sectoral policies; (ii) improve the organization of and active programmes in the labour market; (iii) support the development of human capital; and (iv) strengthen the labour market governance framework.



The skills development system in Mauritania



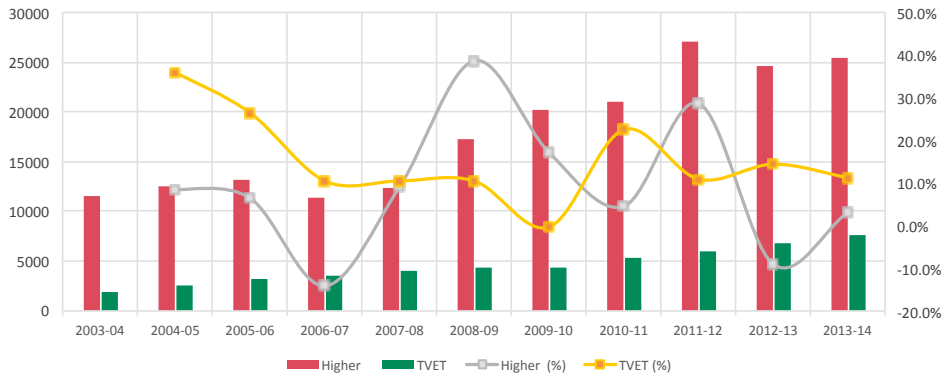
In Mauritania, there are two main types of vocational and technical curricula: those that prepare for the labour market and those that prepare for higher technical education. Curricula that mainly lead to the labour market include two programmes for blue-collar occupations and two for supervisory occupations.

As elsewhere in the ECOWAS region, there are three types of vocational courses in Mauritania: (i) “Formal” technical education, taught in public or private structures within the system; (ii) “Non-formal” vocational training, outside the formal State-approved system; and (iii) “Informal” vocational training, which includes on-the-job training and dual alternating training. The latter is often organized on request. It can also be a source of financial resources for some centres.

As regards size, it should be noted that despite the significant number of institutions, the enrolment capacity of the TVET system remains very limited, with a total of approximately 8,000 places in 28 institutions, across all ministries, institutions and programmes.

TVET coverage has trebled in ten years, from 71 students per 100,000 inhabitants in 2004 to 215 students in 2014. Similarly, higher education has steadily grown in capacity during this period, from 426 students per 100,000 inhabitants in 2004 to 720 in 2014.

Figure 2. Growth in TVET and higher education enrolment from 2003/04 to 2013/14.



Source: ONS - Statistical yearbooks and RESEN 2015.

Since 2003, the number of TVET students has steadily increased from 1,902 in 2003 to 8,000 in 2013/14, i.e. an average annual growth rate of 15.4%.

Despite the progression of TVET coverage, it should be noted that, in the absence of a legal framework for Public-Private Partnerships (PPP), the participation of the private sector and national and international NGOs involved in vocational training remains limited in Mauritania, as projects undertaken in such a framework need to be closely supervised. As a result, these participants contribute only in a limited way to the structures set up to address economic and social needs.

Moreover, despite attempts to diversify and regionalize the supply of training in order to bring it closer to the demand, both social and economic, the enrolment capacity remains limited and covers only 3% of students in secondary education. Despite the fact that the annual number of graduates has increased from 1,200 in 2005 to 2,130 in 2015 - all curricula and levels combined - , the TVET system remains too small for the economic demand. This is shown in the sectoral studies conducted by the National Institute for Technical and Vocational Training (INAP-FTP) to scope the demand for skilled labour in order to match training with labour market requirements.

TVET reform policies

In recent years, technical and vocational education and training has become a policy priority in Mauritania. Several laws and decrees define the legislative TVET framework, including Law No. 98-007 which states the rules and principles governing technical and vocational training (TVET) and creates a single framework. Additionally, the adoption of the TVET strategy (2010-2020) opened the way for better supervision and governance of the TVET system. This strategy also provides a framework for all current reform strategies which aim to improve access to, preparation for and development of skills training. The aim of these reforms is also to help improve productivity and develop business competitiveness.

Accordingly, a new law adopted in July 2018 provides that the purpose of TVET is to “provide qualifications for those who seek vocational, social and cultural training, develop the employability of workers and give businesses resources to improve their productivity and develop competitiveness”.

The two pillars of the strategy to reform the TVET system are as follows:

- I. Pillar 1: Better supervision of technical and vocational education and training.** This pillar includes the creation of MEFPTIC¹ and the development of the TVET strategy itself, as well as the creation of a set of entities, namely the National Institute for the Promotion of Technical and Vocational Training (INAP-FTP) responsible for decision support engineering and TVET development and the TVET Promotion Fund which is administered by INAP-FTP.
- II. Pillar 2: Improve the supply and quality of TVET and knowledge acquisition.** The results sought with this pillar can be summarized in three main points, namely (i) the definition of training programmes to develop and embed continuing training for trainers and the development of teaching materials and support guides; (ii) the overhaul of educational infrastructure, equipment and materials; and (iii) the promotion of dual training (alternating training).

¹ Ministry in charge of Employment, Vocational Training and Information and Communications Technologies.


Governance

Several public and private structures are involved in skills development in Mauritania. The main ones are MEFPTIC, INAP-FTP, the Autonomous Fund for the Promotion of Technical and Vocational Training (FAP-FTP) and ANAPEJ.

MEFPTIC is the apex body in charge of designing, coordinating, monitoring and evaluating national policies on employment, job market access and vocational and technical training, which are implemented by its four central departments, namely: the Employment Department, the Department for the Promotion of Microfinance and Job Market Access, the Technical and Vocational Training Department and the Department for Programming Research and Cooperation.

INAP-FTP is a public entity created in 2002 to align vocational training with market demand by conducting monitoring studies on job market access for TVET graduates. It plays a decisive role in the development of the skills system through several programmes to develop technical and vocational training and facilitate the entry of young people on the job market. It also manages the Autonomous Fund for the Promotion of Technical and Vocational Training (FAP-FTP), which is involved in the funding of all training modes and in TVET supervision.

FAP-FTP's mission is to encourage businesses to participate in the development of vocational training in the best possible way for their skills requirements through financial contributions. This entity helps guide the development of the TVET system based on demand.



This public body provides funding for training centre projects and to overhaul vocational training, particularly on-the-job training, alternation, apprenticeships and entrepreneurship training. ANAPEJ is another entity that works to improve the employability of young people through capacity building.

The private sector and employers' and workers' organizations should play a significant role in TVET development and governance. Law No. 98-007 confirms the need for participatory management and consultation with other public bodies and formal employers' organizations, trade unions, representatives of the TVET private sector and all relevant interest groups. Nevertheless, despite this law and the range of stakeholders involved in the governance of the skills system in Mauritania, it must be noted that the participation of the private sector, which is mostly on cross-functional aspects of the technical and vocational training system, is limited. One of the challenges in this area is the establishment of relevant and regular consultations between the various public and private stakeholders.

In this respect, the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training has a decisive role to play, on the one hand, by facilitating and creating a space for dialogue and consultation between the various public and private skills system stakeholders, and on the other hand, by setting up the necessary mechanisms and conditions to implement PPPs and through communication to inform and raise stakeholders' awareness of the need for better coordination between public and private initiatives seeking to align skills development with labour market requirements.

Social dialogue

To promote social dialogue, the National Council for Social Dialogue (CNDS) was established by the Prime Minister's Decree 2014-156 of October 2014, and its members were appointed by the Minister of Labour in February 2019. The Council's first meeting was held in Nouakchott in September 2019, with the support of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Algiers.

It should also be noted that consultation institutions have been set up, in particular the National Council for Technical and Vocational Training (CNFTP) and the National Council for Labour, Employment and Social Security attached to the Minister of Labour, as well as ANAPEJ.

Additionally, national and sectoral strategy papers also see social dialogue as a key element for success, particularly in the context of consultation institutions or for the PPP (National Council for Labour, Employment and Social Security, National Council for Technical and Vocational Training, etc.). However, the systems of representation and the operation of these entities do not provide opportunities for relevant consultation, which would require wide-ranging representation of all stakeholders, both public and private. Consequently, there is a view that the content of the PPP is being decided solely by the State.



Financing

The financing of skills development comes mainly from the State's budget. Costs linked to the operation and development of the system are covered by endowments from the State budget and other public entities as well as other tax revenue.

Apart from government funding, third parties (private companies, development banks, international aid, etc.) can help fund the TVET system via the Autonomous Fund for the Promotion of Technical and Vocational Training (FAP-FTP). For example, unless exempt, established businesses contribute via the training tax, which amounts to 0.6% of their total payroll. This tax is collected annually by the State and paid to the Treasury, which then provides funding to the FAP-FTP, calculated each year according to the State's available budget.

This Fund was initiated and supported by the World Bank as a way to establish a partnership between the State and the private sector to fund vocational and technical training activities. The Fund receives public and private monies via a Tripartite Funding Allocation Committee.



Skills anticipation

MEFPTIC and its various entities are now at the heart of the employment and training apparatus. All these entities conduct studies on employment, job market access and training to help improve young people's employability and entry into the labour market.

(© ILO)



Several structures are involved in the identification and anticipation of skills requirements, including the Employment Department under MEFPTIC, INAP-FTP and the National Statistics Office (ONS). They are responsible for the preparation of projections on trends in labour supply and demand and for the identification and analysis of the skills needed by the labour market. Several sectoral studies have been carried out by INAP-FTP in this regard. They helped identify the sectors with significant labour requirements, i.e. construction, industry and services. They also revealed a lack of awareness among employers of the options available under the TVET system, both for initial and continuing training.

Despite the presence of these structures, it must be noted that there is a lack of coordination, appropriate tools and means necessary to produce and publish the reliable and comprehensive information needed to anticipate future skills requirements by occupation or trade.

Separately, a prospective vision on job creation and skills development by 2030 was developed as part of the 2018-2030 National Employment Strategy. Projections derived from two scenarios (disruption² vs trends³) show a significant need for new additional jobs between 2015 and 2030 (758,128 jobs in the disruption scenario against 621,085 in the trends scenario).

² The disruption scenario requires converging macroeconomic and sectoral policies for the purpose of meeting the key aim of reducing quantitative and qualitative employment and training shortages.

³ The trend scenario extends to 2030 the effect of the policies implemented during the previous decade on investment in the productive sectors and in education and training.

Skills recognition and quality assurance

In Mauritania, the skills recognition system in “formal” technical and vocational training is organized into two programmes with six categories of credentials issued by government-approved TVET institutions described as “formal”: Advanced Technical Diploma (BTS), Technical High School Certificate (BAC T), Technical Training Certificate (BET), Technical Certificate (BT), Certificate of Professional Competence (CAP) and Certificate of Competency (CC).

There is currently no system for the recognition of skills acquired informally. The only certificates that are issued are specific to the issuing structures (private training centres, NGOs, etc.) which are not officially approved since there is currently no system in place to recognize this type of learning. This situation creates challenges because even when skills have been acquired through informal training, it is very difficult to have them recognized either socially or economically.

With regard to national certification, it should be noted that despite the implementation of the Competency-Based Approach (CBA), the current process does not encourage the involvement of private stakeholders in certification which so far has been the State's exclusive responsibility. This is connected, on the one hand, to the current institutional framework, which does not let the private sector into the certification process, and, on the other, to the tools and materials which do not suit the competency-based approach.

However, legal reforms are being implemented to encourage the involvement of the private sector in technical and vocational certification, including a new law on training standards, assessments and certification. These reforms include the creation of a national commission for the assessment and quality assurance of vocational training, an overarching standard-setting framework (learners' profiles on completion, specializations, skills and knowledge required for the award of the credential, specific conditions of admission and knowledge assessment criteria, etc.).

Social inclusion

Mauritania has made significant efforts in recent years to develop employment and facilitate the access of young people to the labour market. Besides the impact of sustained economic growth, these efforts have focused on developing strategies, creating structures, developing tools and approaches and implementing employment promotion programmes.

In this context, several programmes have been set up to facilitate young people's access to jobs, promote entrepreneurship, develop skills to access employment, and improve the labour market monitoring system. These programmes, which are implemented by ANAPEJ, are: the Self-Employment Programme, the Job Placement Programme, the Skills Development Programme, and Labour Market Monitoring.

The Self-Employment Programme encourages freelance employment amongst young jobseekers by helping them find opportunities and launch small and micro-projects that generate income and create jobs.



The aim of the Job Placement Programme is to survey the labour market in depth in order to identify needs and opportunities and encourage the emergence and multiplication of paid positions for young jobseekers.

The Skills Development Programme aims to achieve a better match between available qualifications and labour market requirements. Through this programme, ANAPEJ focuses on vocational training, reskilling and vocational adjustment to increase the employability of its target population.

Labour Market Monitoring was set up by ANAPEJ to collect, process and publish data on the unemployment situation as a whole and more specifically on unemployment amongst young people. Through its activities, this Department provides other Departments, decision-makers and researchers with current data for decision making and policy planning.

In addition to these programmes, structural projects have been or are in the process of being implemented to help revitalize local economic development in disadvantaged areas of Mauritania and to strengthen and adapt the capabilities of vulnerable young Mauritians to the needs of the labour market. They include the “PECOBAT”⁴ project and the “EMELI”⁵ project.

⁴The overall objective of the PECOBA project is to help stimulate local economic development in disadvantaged areas of Mauritania. The project covers the Wilayas of Brakna (EU), Assaba (AFD), Gorgol and Guidimakha (AFD, EU).

⁵The project titled “Empowering Mauritanian Youth through Education, Leadership and Personal Development” (EMELI) and launched in February 2018, is an ambitious project to develop the skills of young people. It is funded by USAID for a period of three years and implemented by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

Table 2. Evolution in the number of recipients of ANAPEJ benefits (2005 -2015).

	FAEDE	SQR	IDT
2005	424	0	132
2006	617	31	2010
2007	576	172	730
2008	555	250	1308
2009	78	0	352
2010	78	0	75
2011	73	0	456
2012	60	10	350
2013	180	78	161
2014	100	15	220
2015	1596 ⁽¹⁾	216	820

Source: ANAPEJ.

FAEDE : Training to improve jobseekers' employability.

SQR : Qualification and reskilling internship.

IDT : Permanent and casual market entries.

(1) Including 1250 people as drivers of tricycle vehicles and 206 in sewing craft and office automation through a partnership with the Kuwaiti foundation and exceptional aid for ANAPEJ.

Approaches to provide subsidized employment as part of public work projects gives young people an opportunity to learn on the job, acquire additional training, and obtain a certificate of competency (CC) or a certificate at the end.

Another mechanism worth mentioning is the Support Centres for the Integration of Young People (CAP INSERTION), which facilitate social and job market opportunities for young Mauritians. It targets young people aged 15 to 35 in the outlying districts of Nouakchott where pockets of poverty are often found. CAP INSERTION's objective is to assist social integration and access to a decent job and income for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds. This mechanism offers an innovative, structured and coordinated response to the issue of youth integration, with a focus on access to adequate vocational training, effective support and the involvement of key public, private and social stakeholders.

Lifelong learning

Continuing training sessions whilst on the job are organized on request by the Technical and Vocational Training College⁶ LFTPs and the Higher Centre for Technical Education (CSET)⁷ for workers or jobseekers. On completion, a vocational certificate or credential is awarded.

On-the-job training, alternation, apprenticeships and entrepreneurship training are among the main tasks of the FAP-FTP, attached to INAP-FTP. Between 2004 and 2017, FAP-FTP helped fund 322 continuing training sessions for employed workers, 459 sessions for young jobseekers, 54 dual-training sessions, six sessions for apprentices and the equivalent for the self-employed.

⁶ Lycée de formation technique et professionnel.

⁷ Centre Supérieur D'Enseignement Technique.

In addition, research done by INAP-FTP helped organize new modes of training with businesses in four sectors, i.e. construction, services, production-oriented crafts and micro and small rural businesses. After the study was completed, INAP-FTP set up training programmes, job standards, skills charters and teaching materials.

Provided mainly by the State, FAP-FTP's funding is considered lacking. While some funding is provided under the PPP, the challenges associated with the partnership framework restrict the expansion of continuing training, dual training, apprenticeships and self-employment training.



Key challenges

The assessment of the technical and vocational training system led to the conclusion that, despite the progress made in recent years, the system as a whole still faces several challenges, mainly related to the supply of training, and system governance and funding. The main challenges are:

1

The mismatch between the training offered and the skills needed on the labour market.

It is a major obstacle to the integration and transition of young people into working life. This mismatch is partly due to the educational system and technical and vocational training. Indeed, most studies show that the education system is the cause of the negative gap between the qualifications inferred by a credential and those required for a given job.

2 Workplace training is limited.

The desk research and investigations carried out with stakeholders show that most businesses are reluctant to accept trainees from the vocational and technical training system. In addition, the overarching legal framework is lacking and needs to clarify the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder, and there are no tools or support materials for workplace training, with the exception of the experiment conducted by GRET as part of the PAFPA project and the “training worksite” approach.

3 Private sector participation in TVET governance is limited and generally focuses on cross-functional aspects of the system.

One of the challenges in this area is to establish relevant and regular consultations between the various public and private stakeholders.

4

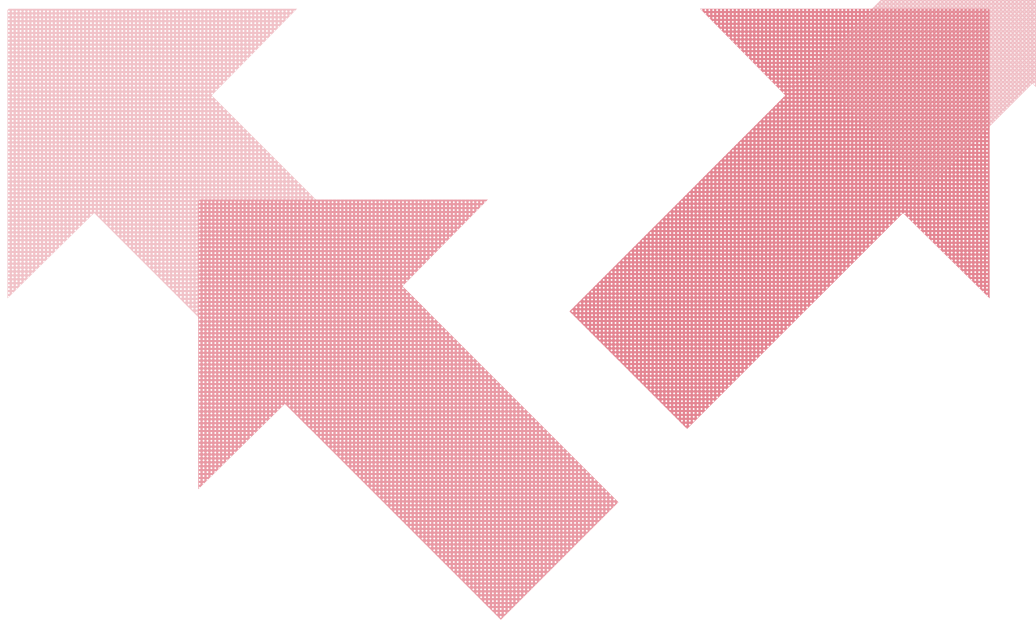
The lack of financial, human and material resources, despite governmental efforts in recent years.

This is mainly due to the low percentage of the national budget which is allocated to TVET. Indeed, the portion of current public expenditure on education allocated to the TVET system stood at only 5.8% in 2014, with 3.1% in payroll, 0.6% in administrative and teaching expenses and 2.1% in transfers (scholarships, subsidies, etc.).



The way forward

In order to support the major changes experienced by the country in recent years as a result of socio-economic shifts and strong population growth, Mauritania has to meet several challenges and obstacles that hinder public policy in the field of technical and vocational training. In this context, several solutions can be considered:





1

Adapt the supply of training to the needs of the job market.

It would be essential to set up a system to identify the skills required and to align the provision of training with the demand, particularly within PPP consultations. This includes in particular (i) developing the necessary tools to identify and anticipate skills requirements and (ii) carrying out in-depth studies on the characteristics of job demand and supply to scope the needs, job profiles sought, recruitment constraints, while taking into account trends in the country's demographic, social and economic context. These investigations will help guide the provision of training to achieve a better match between labour market supply and demand.

2 **Involve the private sector in the development of training.**

This may require new legal frameworks and innovative teaching methods, and, above all, business engagement. Businesses can also help support the data system with standardized information on future employment based on their forecasts and estimates. In addition, workplace training plays an essential role in the learning process and it is the best way to gain practical experience. In this context, efforts should be made by the State to encourage businesses to provide training in partnership with TVET centres, based on existing experience in the country (apprenticeship, training worksite), and through financial and non-financial incentives and encouragements.

3 **Improve the use of TVET resources.**

With new training methods, including distance learning, NICT and the involvement of national and international NGOs.



4

Use a regional approach as a lever to improve the training of trainers.

By inviting the best in the region to train beginners and develop those who are least skilled. The introduction of distance learning and the use of NICTs are thought necessary.

5 Bring stakeholders together to develop a mechanism for the recognition of prior learning.

Aligned with national trades and skills standards and able to fit with a future regional reference framework.

6 Develop a TVET map.

This map should include non-formal and informal forms of skills acquisition.

7

Improve the governance of the TVET system.

The Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training has a key role to play, on the one hand, by facilitating and creating a space for dialogue with the social partners and consultation between the various public and private participants in the operation of the TVET system at national, regional and sectoral levels, and on the other, by setting up the necessary mechanisms and conditions for the implementation of the PPP.

8

Increase and diversify financial resources.

The State must make additional financial efforts to boost the TVET system in Mauritania. The country must therefore focus on improving the funding governance of the TVET system as a whole. Supporting policies will also be required to safeguard the return on investment of the system in the form of improved access to training by young people and quality of learning.

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