African Continental Qualifications Framework

MAPPING STUDY

Country Report – Update 2021

Working Paper

MOROCCO

SIFA

Skills for Youth Employability Programme

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Content

Abbreviations

ACQF	African Continental Qualifications Framework
ANAPEC	Agence Nationale de Promotion de l'Emploi et des Compétences
ANCLA	Agence Nationale pour la lutte Contre l'Analphabétisme
ANEAQ	Agence Nationale d'Évaluation et d'Assurance Qualité de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique
ANQAHE	Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
APC	Approche par Competences
ASG-QA	African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education
AST	Analysis of the work situation
BTS	Brevet de Technicien Supérieur
CGEM	Confédération Générale des Entreprises Du Maroc
CNPN	Cahiers des Normes Pédagogiques Nationales
CSEFRS	Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation de la Formation et de la Recherche Scientifique
CSMD	Special Commission for the Development Model
DFP	Department of Professional Training
ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
EU	European Union
FORCAP	Project supporting TVET
GDP	gross domestic product
HAQAA	Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation
HCP	Haut-Commissariat au Plan
MENFPESRS	Ministry of National Education, Professional Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research
NQF	national qualifications framework
OdB	Observatoire des Branches
OFPPT	Office de la Formation Professionnelle et de la Promotion du Travail
REAPC	Reforme de l'Education par le Biais de l'Approche par Competences
REC	Référentiel Emplois-Compétences
REM	Répertoire Emplois-Métiers
THAMM	Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa
VAE	validation of acquired experience
VET	vocational education and training
VNFIL	validation of non-formal and informal learning

1 Introduction and context

1.1 NQF snapshot

The national qualifications framework (NQF) in Morocco benefits from a decade of national dialogue, peer learning with other countries, and growing political support, which resulted in the revalidation of the conceptual-technical document (in 2019) and the establishment of a governing committee (Permanent NQF Commission) set up to coordinate actions leading to effective operationalisation of the NQF. The draft decree establishing the new NQF operational structure (Instance Opérationnelle du Cadre National de la Certification) has been in the consultation process for approval since mid 2021. Due to restructuring of lead Ministry in the context of the new government confirmed in October 2021 after the elections, the institutional setting of the NQF entity is no

A technical document – the NQF Reference Document (2013) – defining the levels and descriptors was validated in 2019 by the Ministry of National Education, Professional Training, Higher Education and Scientific Research (MENFPESRS). However, there is no legal act establishing the parameters and features of the NQF for concrete and systemic application in the education and training system. But there are positive perspectives concerning steps to implementation: in 2021 the government is carrying out a wide range of education and training reforms, wherein the NQF features prominently.

It is worth noting the elements of the established education and system, which will enable the implementation of future NQF legislation and regulations. This is the case for the learning outcomes approach, and the quality assurance system (policy, practice and institutions). On the other hand, two important components have yet to be established system-wide for the NQF to function as a policy instrument supporting coherence among sub-systems and mobility: a) the system of validation of acquired experience (VAE) and b) the credit accumulation and transfer system. Both components have developed a conceptual and methodological foundation, which can be further consolidated for a system-wide application when ongoing reforms reach maturity.

According to the NQF Reference Document (2013), the Moroccan NQF is comprehensive and structured in eight levels (1 to 8), each defined by six domains of level descriptors: Knowledge, skills, complexity, autonomy/responsibility, adaptability, and communication. Placement of qualifications in NQF levels has been undertaken on an experimental basis, not legally confirmed, since 2015–2016.

In 2019 the NQF was for the first time mentioned in law. The new framework Law no. 51-17 on the system of education training and scientific research, promulgated on 9 August 2019, defines the objective of the NQF, and the scope of the NQF institution:

> …the establishment of a national framework for certification and validation that determines, in particular, the rules and criteria for the classification of diplomas and the validation of the professional and artisanal achievements of learners. This framework is developed by an independent national body with representation of the various education and training sectors and professional organisations, created by a regulatory text for this purpose.[1]

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[1] Article 35 of Dahir no. 1-19-113 du 7 hija 1440 (9 August 2019) portant promulgation de la loi-cadre no. 51-17 relative au système d'éducation, de formation et de recherche scientifique, Bulletin officiel: édition de traduction officielle du 17/12/2020: http://www.sgg.gov.ma/Portals/0/BO/2020/BO_6944_Fr.pdf?ver=2020-12-24-133647-943

By delegation of the Government Presidency (June 2019) the MENFPESRS led the development of the NQF. However, this unified ministry of all sub-sectors of education and training no longer exists from 7 October 2021. The NQF is also governed by two main commissions of a political and coordinating nature, but with limited operational capacity: a) the National NQF Steering Commission, political and strategic decisions; b) the NQF Permanent Commission, inter-stakeholder composition, coordination and preparation of the activities and steps to operationalise the NQF.

The establishment of the new NQF operational institution with the necessary resources and management is likely to be a challenging undertaking, requiring time for negotiation after the elections of September 2021. The draft decree on the establishment of this new NQF structure has been in the consultation process since mid-2021 but was not approved before the elections. The new government confirmed on 7 October 2021 has split the previous unified MENFPESRS into two ministries: Ministry of higher education scientific research and innovation and Ministry of National Education Preschool and Sports. The Department of vocational education and training has moved under the responsibility of the Ministry of economic inclusion small enterprise employment and competences. At the moment of writing this update (October 2021) it is not yet known which of the indicated ministries will host the NQF operational structure.

1.2   Policy context

The Moroccan NQF is underpinned by a range of policy and legislative documents, such as the Framework Law no. 51-17 on Education Training and Scientific Research (adopted 19 August 2019), the Strategic Vision 2030 for a School of Equity Quality and Promotion, and the Professional Training Strategy 2021.

The government of Morocco is currently working to develop a new model of economic development for the country, which will have a special focus on competences and human development, enhanced education and vocational training programmes and bolder policies to boost job creation in order to promote inclusive growth through a modernised social protection system. The Special Commission for the Development Model (CSMD) coordinates and facilitates an open citizens' consultation to gather proposals and views and has activated a specific website for this purpose.

The African Economic Outlook 2020 of the African Development Bank Group (AFDB 2020) suggests that the country's location can serve as a strategic hub for foreign companies looking to operate or set up businesses in Africa. The bank mentions three main structural challenges for the country, namely, a) developing human capital through education and training that meet the needs of the economy; b) rationalising the social protection system; and c) removing rigidities in the labour market and reducing youth unemployment.

The World Bank reports that on the economic front, growth has slowed below its potential, constrained by a volatile, rain-fed agricultural sector and slow growth in the tertiary sector. Real gross domestic product (GDP) slowed to 2.7 per cent in 2019, while non-agricultural growth improved by 3.4 per cent (compared to 3 per cent in 2018), driven by the better performance of phosphates, chemicals and textiles. The unemployment rate declined slightly to 9.3 per cent in the first quarter of 2019 (from 9.8 per cent in the first quarter of 2018), underlined by a protracted decline in the labour force participation, which decreased to 46.1 per cent.

Over the medium term, growth is projected to pick up gradually, mainly driven by more dynamic secondary and tertiary activities, bolstered by foreign investments. In particular, significant foreign direct investment continues to flow into automotive industries, especially the new Peugeot plant, which will eventually double the sector's production capacity, as well as into logistics and trade services following the expansion of the Tangiers port.

As of May 2021, Morocco has a population of approximately 36 269 million (HCP), of which 27 per cent are 14 years old and younger.

In 2020–21 the government reacted to the risk to life caused by the spread of Covid-19, and legislated full or partial closures of business operations and schools, causing a sharp shock to the economy, employment and to the income of the population. Covid-19 exacerbated inequality and poverty has risen in this period. The country is implementing an efficient Covid-19 vaccination campaign.

The Haut-Commissariat au Plan/Higher Planning Commission (HCP) reports that the labour market situation in the first quarter of 2021 continues to be affected by the crisis of the national economy aggravated in 2020. The employment crisis in 2020 has been mainly marked by rising unemployment and inactivity, particularly among women and young people.

The unemployment rate rose from 10.5 to 12.5 per cent nationally, from 15.1 to 17.1 per cent in urban areas and from 3.9 to 5.3 per cent in rural areas. It recorded a sharp increase among women, from 14.3 to 17.5 per cent, among young people aged 15 to 24, from 26.8 to 32.5 per cent, and among graduates, from 17.8 to 19.8 per cent. The employed labour force in situation of underemployment reached 988 000. The rate of underemployment rose from 8.8 to 9.2 per cent nationally, from 8.7 to 8.9 per cent in urban areas and from 8.9 to 9.6 per cent in rural areas.

Between the first quarter of 2020 and the 2021 first quarter, with the creation of 56 000 urban jobs and a loss of 258 000 jobs in rural areas, the national economy lost 202 000 jobs at the national level, mainly unpaid jobs (185 000 jobs). A year earlier, between the first quarters of 2019 and 2020, it had created 77 000 jobs. With an increase of 242 000 unemployed people, including 185 000 in urban areas and 57 000 in rural areas, the volume of unemployment has reached 1 534 000 people nationally.

1.3 NQF legal basis

The current legislative and policy base underpinning the development of the NQF and forward-looking measures to put it in motion is composed of the newly adopted Law No. 51-17 (Education), Strategies and Action Plans, presented in detail in Table 1.

- Measures and dispositions supporting the implementation of the High Royal Directives presented at the start of the new academic year 2018–2019 on the 'Promotion of Youth Employment'
- Framework Law on Education: Loi Cadre no. 51-17 (adopted on 9 August 2019) on the system of education, training and scientific research
- Education Strategy: Pour une École de l'Équité, de la Qualité et de la Promotion: Vision Stratégique de la Réforme 2015–2030
- Professional training strategy: Stratégie Nationale de la Formation Professionnelle 2021
- Action plan for higher education: Plan d'Action de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique (2017–2021).

Other legal acts and policies related to the NQF:
- Law 01.00 on higher education
- Law 12.00 on apprenticeship
- Law 13.00 on the statute of private professional training
- Law 60-17 on the organisation of continuing training of private-sector employees, of certain categories of staff of public establishments and enterprises and other non-wage workers engaged in private activities (published on 6 October 2018).

The law on professional training is currently under development. It is expected to play an important role in enhancing coherence and permeability in the ecosystem of vocational qualifications.

2   Policy objectives

2.1 Education and training reforms

The government policy is contextualised in the Strategic Vision of Education Reform (Vision Stratégique de la Réforme de l'Enseignement à l'Horizon 2030), addressing four major purposes:

- equity and equality of opportunities;
- quality for all;
- promotion of the individual and society; and
- efficient leadership and renewed conduction of change.

The Strategic Vision 2015–2030 is articulated with other elements of the policy framework:

- the Framework Law no. 51-17, adopted in 2019;
- the Government Executive Plan 2017–2021;
- Performance Projects (three years) of the different ministerial departments; and
- with regard to professional training, the Strategic Vision 2015–2030 has integrated the strategic strands of the National Professional Training Strategy 2021.

The main orientations of the Strategic Vision 2015–2030 have been translated in the Framework Law 51-17, adopted in 2019. This law safeguards the integrity of the Strategic Vision from political and institutional risks, represents a national pact binding for all parties, and supports the establishment of the legal basis for implementation.

In 2020–21 the government is pursuing actions to implement a wide range of reforms of education and training, triggered by the Loi Cadre no. 51-17. According to available information, nineteen reform programmes are in preparation or have started implementation, of which a number are transversal to all subsectors of education and training. One the reform programmes – *Evaluation and certification* – directly concerns the NQF.

Table 1: Reform Strategies and Policies in Education and Training and Links to the NQF

Text/Source	Main references to the NQF
Measures and dispositions supporting the implementation of the High Royal Directives	Among the measures presented at the start of the academic year 2018–19 on the 'Promotion of Youth Employment' the following are considered key: - Put in place and implement the NQF - Put in place an integrated system for validation of competences acquired in professional experiences.
Framework Law on Education Training and Scientific Research no. 51-17	- The NQF: Mechanism to define and classify diplomas at national level, according to a reference scale of parameters applied to levels of learning outcomes, and reflecting the needs of the labour market and societal development (Article 2)

Loi Cadre no. 51-17 (adopted on 9 August 2019)	- Establishment of a <u>NQF for certification and homologation of diplomas</u>, and comprising, in particular, the modalities and classification criteria of diplomas, validation of learning outcomes of professional and crafts activities. This framework is conceived by an autonomous national commission created for this purpose, representing the various sectors of education and training, as well as professional organisations and sanctioned by a regulatory Act (Article 35).
Strategic Vision of the education reform 2015–2030 Pour une École de l'Équité, de la Qualité et de la Promotion: Vision Stratégique de la Réforme 2015–2030	**Lever 12, point 80: NQF** 'Establish a national qualification system able to organise and classify certificates and diplomas, on the base of a reference grid defined by the departments in charge of education, training and scientific research. Such a framework will enable transparency and clarity, but also comparability of diplomas on the basis of a national guide of certification; will improve the instruments of assessment of learning outcomes from schooling and training and enhance their credibility and effectiveness. The framework will also assure national and international mobility of diplomas.' **Lever 12, point 81: Validation of learning from professional experience** 'Establish a system of accreditation of competences from professional experience to the benefit of persons with experience allowing them to access lifelong learning opportunities.' **Lever 19, point 102: Validation of cognitive and professional outcomes** 'Adopt a unified system of validation of cognitive and professional learning outcomes of individuals, supervised by an independent national instance, in which are represented the different departments of education, training and professional sectors.'
Vocational Training Strategy 2021 Stratégie Nationale de la Formation Professionnelle 2021	**Fifth strategic axis**: Valorisation of professional pathways through better articulation of the components of the education and training system. 5.6: National Qualifications Framework 'The NQF is an instrument for classification of certificates and diplomas awarded in the country, with reference to coherent levels of mastery of knowledge, skills and competences, according to a set of pertinent criteria defined on the basis of learning outcomes. Structured on a grid of eight levels and six descriptors, the NQF is a reference system for quality of certificates and professional diplomas delivered in Morocco, recognised by the labour market. Certificates and diplomas classified in the NQF are registered in a national register (repertoire) of qualifications, which will comprise all public and private qualifications at all levels of education and training.'
Action plan of higher education and scientific research (2017–21)	**Action 11. Continue the pedagogic reform** Measure 11.10: 'Assure, in partnership with all stakeholders, the establishment and operationalisation of the NQF and the implications in terms of review and renewal of programmes, and courses.'

2.2 Aims of the NQF

In the Reference Document (2013) the NQF is defined as follows:

An instrument for regulation of qualifications based on objective characteristics of quality, in view of their recognition by the labour market. It is an instrument for referencing of qualifications, whose quality is in line with a quality assurance system that takes account of learning outcomes, prescribed by the labour market following a prospective analysis.

The Framework Law on Education No. 51-17 partially confirms the above definition but Article 2 also adds a new driving element beyond the labour market: the society:

The national certification framework: a tool for identifying and classifying diplomas at the national level, in accordance with a reference grid of applicable standards on different levels of learning outcomes, which takes into account the needs of the labour market and the development of society.

3 Levels, learning outcomes and qualifications

3.1 NQF scope and structure

According to the NQF Reference Document (2013), the Moroccan NQF is comprehensive and structured in eight levels (1 to 8), each defined by six domains of level descriptors: Knowledge, skills, complexity, autonomy/responsibility, adaptability, and communication.

The level descriptors in the Moroccan NQF are formulated with a degree of detail and can serve as a reference for stakeholders and practitioners involved in designing competence standards, learning programmes and assessment standards. By opting for the indicated domains, the involved stakeholders took account of key strategic areas for the future of education and training, such as communication skills, as well as adaptability.

Analysis and placement of qualifications in NQF levels was undertaken on an experimental basis in 2015–16, for middle- and higher-level qualifications in the construction and automotive sectors.

By recommendation of the Department of Professional Training (DFP), aimed at supporting practical application of the principles of the NQF, vocational training operators are required to take into account the level descriptors of the NQF in the development of standards (referential) and programmes. This recommendation is in its initial stage of implementation.

3.2 Types of qualifications

The NQF Reference Document (2013) defines the types of qualifications allocated by levels.

The Moroccan NQF is structured in eight levels (1 to 8). Table 2 shows the correspondence between NQF levels and education levels/respective diplomas, according to the NQF Reference Document.

Table 2: NQF Level and Correspondence with Levels and Diplomas of the Subsectors of Education and Training

NQF level	National education	Vocational training	Higher education

1	Mid-primary	Certificat de Formation Professionnelle (CFP)	
2	Primary	Spécialisation	
3	CE9	Qualification	
4	Baccalauréat (Bac), Bac Professionnel (Bac Pro)	Technicien	
5 (Bac+2)	Brevet de technicien supérieur (BTS)	Technicien spécialisé	• Diplôme Études Universitaires Générales (DEUG) • Diplôme des Études Universitaires Professionnelles (DEUP) • Diplôme Universitaire de Technologie (DUT)
6 (Bac+3)			• Licence Études Fondamentales (LF) • Licence Professionnelle
7 (Bac+5)			• Master (M) • Master spécialisé (MS) • Master Sciences et Techniques (MST) • Diplôme d'ingénieur (DI) • Diplôme de l'ENCG et diplôme de traduction
8 (Bac+8)			• Doctorat (D)

Note: 'Bac' stands for Baccalauréat *(diploma at conclusion of secondary education)*

3.3 Quality assurance of qualifications

Higher education

The main legal and regulatory acts on public and private higher education, and of accreditation of programmes and authorisation of universities and establishment, can be found at: Higher Education.

The Assessment and Quality Assurance National Standards for Higher Education in Morocco, the Agence Nationale d'Evaluation et d'Assurance Qualité de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique (ANEAQ) was created in 2014 by Law no. 80-12 of 21 August 2014. The agency is mandated to implement the quality assurance processes of quality assurance of programmes and institutions in higher education, and in scientific research. The website of ANEAQ opens with the keywords 'Evaluate to evolve'.

In higher education, the introduction of the principle of quality assurance was based on the three main measures stipulated by Law no. 01-00 on higher education. The principle of evaluation of institutions is a lever for reform and is characterised by:

- global nature, regularity and ex-post approach;
- mandatory self-evaluation for all higher education institutions (public and private);

- obligation to disclose the results of evaluation to the bodies at national and regional levels;
- obligation to inform the public on the evaluation results; and
- audits and evaluations by specialised and independent institutions.

ANEAQ started operations in 2016, and in 2017 and 2018 conducted two rounds of external evaluation of programmes. Over 1 600 programmes of public and private higher education institutions were evaluated, namely, a) in 2017 – 771 programmes of public institutions and 255 of private institutions, b) in 2018 – 293 and 323 programmes, respectively. In addition, ANEAQ conducted an evaluation of progress and monitoring of a sample of programmes that had been accredited in 2017 (157 programmes of the 12 public universities). For details on the evaluation, see ANEAQ (2018), Rapport d'Évaluation et de Suivi d'un Échantillon de Filières à Accès Régulé Accréditées au Titre de la Session 2017. The pilot round of the evaluation of higher education institutions (in 2020–21), focused on 17 establishments, was successfully concluded and conclusions discussed at a high-level webinar in April 2021.

ANEAQ presented a first self-evaluation report, a starting point for the first pilot external evaluation of ANEAQ conducted in November 2018 under the auspices of the Africa-European Union (EU) Partnership's initiative, the Harmonisation of African Higher Education Quality Assurance and Accreditation (HAQAA). The report of this external evaluation examined ANEAQ's compliance with a selection of standards of the African Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ASG-QA).

A fundamental development is the adoption by decree (11 July 2019) of the National Referential (Standard) of Evaluation and Quality Assurance, which defines the fields, references and criteria applied to all institutions of higher education and scientific research. The referential defines the processes of quality assurance:

- Quality assurance: Processes and mechanisms for assessing the degree of achievement of objectives and agreeing on methods of continuous improvement of the institution's activities.
- Evaluation: A systematic audit process to measure the institution's ability to meet specific requirements and achieve specific objectives by comparing the level of performance to the institution's criteria or expectations. Its objective is to situate the strengths and weaknesses of the institution, given the public nature of the response and of the reports.
- Internal assessment: Self-assessment conducted by the institution, formalised in a report called the 'self-assessment report', which is addressed to a committee of external experts.
- External assessment: Assessment conducted by independent experts external to the institution, who have no interest that could affect their judgement.
- Quality audit: A periodic process of quality analysis of the higher education institution or its affiliated units by independent pairs to verify compliance with quality requirements and to propose necessary changes.

Vocational education

The MENFPESRS is tasked with the functions of authorisation, qualification of programmes, accreditation and control of private establishments of professional training.

In addition, the DFP coordinates the policy of the subsector and in this role undertakes initiatives to enable better quality processes and the overall performance of the sub-system. Since 2014, a system of performance monitoring has been in development, of which the quality assurance framework is a component. Practical implementation is underway, currently focusing on self-evaluation of public and private providers of professional education.

Other elements of quality assurance in vocational education comprise a) the methodology of the Approche par Competences/Competence-Based Approach (APC) and b) regular surveys of employment outcomes and further education of graduates (graduate tracer studies), whose methodology and coverage is currently undergoing substantial upgrading.

The scope of quality assurance of private professional training encompasses authorisation of creation, qualification of programmes and accreditation of establishments, and is regulated as follows:

- Authorisation of private establishments of professional training: Feasibility study, pedagogic project, training project, administrative file.
- Qualification of programmes of private establishments of professional training: To assure compliance with standards and pedagogic and training conditions.
- Accreditation of private establishments of professional training: Gives authorisation to carry out examinations and deliver diplomas officially recognised by the state.
- Control of private establishments of professional training: the DFP exercises the functions of pedagogic and administrative control.

3.4 Use of learning outcomes and standards

Use of learning outcomes in vocational education and training

Learning outcomes-based qualifications is a well-rooted approach in the professional training sub-system. In Morocco, the APC has been continuously promoted by the government and has gathered substantial experience of more than a decade of methodological developments, programme design and implementation, and the training of APC specialists.

The notion of *competence* in the APC has distinctive nuances:

- specific competence;
- transversal competence;
- output competence to be achieved at end of programme – described in the training project (matrix of competences, or training objects): listed in the transcript of competences; and
- specific descriptors – described in the APC component 'Analysis of the work situation' (AST): cognitive and motor skills, complexity, communication.

The successive APC/Reforme de l'Education par le Biais de l'Approche par Competences (REAPC) projects conducted between 2003 and 2016 resulted in the design and review of 159 programmes of all qualification levels of the professional training system. There were 130 APC programmes that were effectively implemented and launched in 213 public and private institutions. The APC methodological framework is detailed in a package of 17 guides and support materials.

- The website of the project REAPC published a large library of technical-methodological documentation and provides access to detailed information on all components of the approach.
- The Moroccan APC is an ecosystem to govern professional training. More than a methodological package for design of competence standards, programmes and assessment, the APC includes instruments to identify and analyse skills needs by sectors, and to evaluate the performance of professional training as a system.
- The APC methodological framework of last generation (2015) is online and is structured and includes 11 guides.

Use of learning outcomes in higher education

In higher education, the regulatory framework defines the rules for design of programmes (for accreditation) at all cycles and levels. The detailed structure for programmes leading to qualifications is provided in the Cahiers des Normes Pédagogiques Nationales/National Pedagogic Standards (CNPN). These standards are specific for each qualification level and type. Programmes for accreditation include, among the essential components, objectives of training, competences to be acquired, employment opportunities of the qualification, admission conditions, pathways, and links with other programmes. All programmes are structured in modules of learning.

Level descriptors of NQF versus learning outcomes of qualifications

Testing of the 'Guide on Analysis and Positioning of Qualifications in the NQF', carried out in 2016 on two existing qualifications of higher education and two of professional education, shed light on the extent to which the learning outcomes formulated in the programmes documentation meet/match the descriptors of the assigned NQF levels.

The comparison with each of the six categories of descriptors shows that some categories are more explicitly represented in the programmes' learning outcomes than others – for example, knowledge and skills are better represented than communication and adaptability.

Use of professional and qualifications standards

Répertoire Emplois-Métiers (REM) / Référentiel Emplois-Compétences (REC)

The REM and the REC list and classify competences by occupations within a sector. As an example, the collection REM/REC for the construction sector shows how the definition and hierarchisation of competences becomes more fine-grained in the REC, whereas the REM has a more explicit orientation to the features of the professional profile. There are 716 REM and 815 REC developed for a total of 18 sectors.

REM and REC are important references for the process of developing units of competence, programmes, and qualifications in professional education. REM/REC are sectoral classifications of occupational standards and competence profiles. Morocco has invested in developing REM/REC for 18 sectors. REM and REC are developed by professional branches and sector ministries (tourism, industry and others), with methodological support from the DFP and involvement of the public employment institution, the Agence Nationale de Promotion de l'Emploi et des Compétences (ANAPEC). REM and REC are based on the principle of learning outcomes. REM describes key functions and activities by occupation, as well as key required competences. REC provides a fine and detailed description of tasks, skills and competences.

Together, REM and REC are management tools of the occupations (by sector) to reinforce coherence between learning outcomes (expressing enterprises' needs) and vocational education and training (VET) programmes. REM and REC contribute to the transparency and quality of training and qualification outcomes. Finally, REM and REC are sound foundations to establish mechanisms for validation of non-formal and informal learning, and elements of career information and guidance.

In higher education

The main reference for development of programmes for accreditation in higher education is the CNPN. The regulatory framework defines the rules for design of programmes (for accreditation) at all cycles and levels, and the structure of programmes. These standards are specific for each qualification level and type.

3.5 Credit systems

The core strategic and legislative base of education and training, such as Law no. 01-00 on higher education and Law no. 51-17 on education, recognise the importance of better organised pathways between sub-systems and education institutions and the introduction of *passerelles* (gateways) to foster re-integration of learners, continuation of studies and reskilling in a lifelong perspective.

The higher education sub-system undertook pilot initiatives to develop a credit accumulation and training system, in cooperation with EU-supported projects. But a credit system has not yet been set in legislation and mainstreamed. In the sub-system of vocational education and national education, the adoption of a credit system is not considered a priority at the present time.

4 Institutional arrangements and stakeholder involvement

4.1 Governance and institutional arrangements for the NQF

By delegation of the Government Presidency (June 2019), the MENFPESRS coordinated and led the development of the NQF. In this context, in December 2020 the Ministry and the NQF Permanent Commission initiated the consultation process underpinning the elaboration of the legal statute of the new independent national NQF institution, as defined by Law no. 51-17. This NQF structure is expected to be established in 2021 to operationalise and implement the NQF.

The MENFPESRS was responsible, in particular, for the approval of educational standards, for the coordination and quality assurance of development of APC programmes for VET qualifications and occupational standards (REM/REC), and for management of the database of VET APC programmes and standards.

In addition, two commissions are involved in the governance of the NQF:

- The National NQF Steering Commission: composed of ministers and the president of the employers' confederation, the Confédération Générale des Entreprises Du Maroc (CGEM). Created by letter no. 10/2019 of the Government Presidency of 28 June 2019.

- The NQF Permanent Commission: created by decision no. 489 of the MENFESRS of 26 July 2019. It is a multi-stakeholder commission, including the employers' confederation (CGEM) entrusted with the mission to consolidate and operationalise the NQF.

4.2 Roles and functions of actors and stakeholders

The Permanent Commission is composed of twenty members and is mandated to lay the ground for the NQF and to prepare for the establishment the future independent institutions, as defined by the Framework Law no. 51-17 on Education and by the Strategic Vision of the Reform 2015–2030. The operational core of the commission is composed of seven permanent members with complementary profiles and representing the three sub-systems – national education, VET and higher education.

The Decision No. 489 of 26 July 2019 defines the mission and the functions of the Permanent Commission as follows:

<u>Mission</u>: **Consolidation and launch of operations of the NQF**

- Lay a coherent groundwork between the components of the NQF system;
- contribute to preparing the specifications of the future national instance of the NQF to be created; and
- participate in the implementation of VAE.

Functions:

A. Consolidation and launch of the NQF operations
- Ensure coordination among the various stakeholders;
- put in place a monitoring mechanism for the implementation of the NQF; and
- build capacity of the stakeholders.

B. In terms of operationalisation of the NQF
- Define the approach and procedures for processing of applications for levelling and registration of qualifications on:
    - o eligibility conditions of the application and components of the application file; and
    - o submission of the application.
- register certifications in the register (repertoire);
- define quality standards, as references for analysis of qualifications in view of their registration;
- define the configuration and components of the register (repertoire) of qualifications;
- set a standardised description of certifications;
- define templates and forms;
- define the terms of reference for the NQF information system, including the register, the NQF portal and interactions between stakeholders and NQF staff; and
- ensure the institutionalisation of the various components of the NQF.

C. In terms of reflection and advice:
- Submit proposals concerning the elaboration of the governance and organisation of the qualification system;
- define the quality process of the NQF, notably the register;
- analyse projects of international cooperation and institutional twinning projects;
- examine the referencing/reconciliation possibilities of the Moroccan NQF to national/international, multinational meta-frameworks including the meta-framework of the EU, the European Qualifications Framework (EQF);
- contribute to defining the national NQF agency/institution (Framework Law no. 51/17); and
- contribute to the proposal on the VAE system (procedures, tools, information system, system of assessment and validation of skills/competences).

The composition of the new NQF Permanent Commission includes key players of labour market institutions, professional branches and the employers' confederation:

- ANAPEC: The National Agency for Promotion of Employment and Competences is the public employment agency. It implements and coordinates active labour market policies, including training. ANAPEC has a key role in overseeing the REM.
- Labour Market Observatory: Monitors and anticipates labour market and skills dynamics, evaluates employment policies, analyses job vacancies and employers' demand for skills and qualifications.

- General Confederation of the Enterprises of Morocco (CGEM): A committed participant of the NQF development process for more than a decade, CGEM's Training Commission participated in NQF methodology experimentation and qualifications transparency projects.
- The Observatoire des Branches (OdB): Created in 2014 under the auspices of CGEM to support the professional branches in coping with the rapid transformation of the economic and technological context and, in particular, to analyse occupational change and produce the competence standards for continuing training.

5   Recognising and validating non-formal and informal learning and learning pathways

5.1   Validation of non-formal and informal learning arrangements (VAE)

The Strategic Vision 2015–2013 foresees the development of a system of validation of learning outcomes from experience (VAE): 'Adopt a unified system of validation of individuals' cognitive and professional achievements, overseen by an independent national body, where the various departments of education and training and professional sectors will be represented' (Lever 19, p.70).

The DFP, in partnership with sector federations and sector ministries, carried out several VAE projects in sectors with high demand for labour with qualifications:
- 2008–10: In the sector of construction, 138 candidates were awarded qualifications for 13 sector occupations of three NQF levels (technician specialist, technician and qualification); 320 candidates and 62 enterprises participated.
- 2011–12: In the textile/garments sector, 19 candidates were awarded qualifications.
- In the follow-up of these successful projects, between 2012 and 2016, the ministry promoted additional VAE projects in different regions, in the sectors of construction (100 candidates), hotels (200 candidates) and meat processing (400 candidates).

The VAE process is structured in four phases, according to the VAE handbook of the DFP:
1. Information and counselling of the candidates: On the VAE process and its requirements, preliminary screening of the professional experience in view of the envisaged certification.
2. Admissibility: Instruct the application file and decide on the eligibility.
3. Follow-up: Support the candidate in the preparation of the Dossier of Description of Professional Experience and prepare for the process of certification.
4. Certification: The jury decides on the validation of the competences from professional experience – on the basis of the certification standard.

The qualifications awarded as the outcome of a VAE process do not have the same value and standing as qualifications from formal VET because the adequate legislation is not in place yet.

The NQF Permanent Commission is mandated to prepare the premises and legal-regulatory basis for establishment a functioning VAE system. This will be fostered within the EU via institutional twinning to support the NQF, expected to start in 2022.

The alphabetisation agency, Agence Nationale pour la lutte Contre l'Analphabétisme (ANCLA) offers validation of prior learning to beneficiaries in six specialised centres.

6 NQF implementation and impact

6.1 Key achievements and main findings

The CNC is part of the system, although not yet regulated by a legal text. It is a set of principles, a concept of qualification levels and a vision of how to achieve this. But it is also an already established foundation that needs to be emphasised. For the path ahead, there are a reference history, achievements and teachings that will give the Moroccan CNC its specificity and its added value.

From a technical and methodological point of view alone, the foundations of the CNC include the REM-REC system, the competence-based approach (APC), the quality assurance framework (in particular in higher education), the basic elements for a future validation of non-formal and informal learning (VNFIL)/VAE system, and soon also a digitalised database of vocational training programmes and standards.

These foundations also include an essential element of any CNC: active socio-economic partners committed to a more explicit – and above all – functional NQF: the CGEM, the OdB and other professional organisations.

Two components of the qualifications system are not yet in place: the credit accumulation and transfer system and VNFIL/VAE. On the bright side, it is worth noting that the conceptual and technical basis of the credit system in higher education has been studied with European partners. It is also expected that VNFIL/VAE can build on lessons from pilot projects and will be able to move towards a better articulation with the NQF, allowing the granting of certifications to be fully integrated into the NQF. Both components – the credit system and VAE – should be further considered from the angle of their contribution to progression and mobility of individuals throughout life, and the NQF is a major enabler of that strategy.

The certificates of the national functional literacy programme are real opportunities for thousands of Moroccans to access the gateways to education and training/certifications of the CNC, and the CNC can demonstrate its added value in the context of social inclusion and its ability to contribute to change.

6.2 Qualifications registers and databases

The number of programmes leading to qualifications offered in the sub-systems of educations and training can be summarised as follows:

- Brevet de technicien supérieur: 22 programmes
- Vocational education (public and private): 347 programmes, distributed over four levels (2018–19). Refer to Figures 1 and 2 for the graphic breakdown of VET programmes / qualifications by levels and by sectors.
- Public higher education institutions: 2 345 (2018–2019).

The definition of the components and configuration of the repertoire of all qualifications, aligned with NQF levels and principles, is one of the attributions of the NQF Permanent Commission.

In 2021 the Department of Vocational Education, working in cooperation with the EU project 'FORCAP', will launch a comprehensive register of VET programmes and standards.

Approved education programmes and related qualifications from the key sub-systems – national education, professional education and higher education – are organised in different and separate instruments, including: a) databases for internal use of the relevant ministerial departments, not open for public users; b) information on courses, programmes and qualifications published the websites of different sub-systems of MENFPESRS,

and of education and training institutions, such as the Office de la Formation Professionnelle et de la Promotion du Travail (OFPPT), training centres and higher education institutions. This information on programmes and qualification is concise, with the exception of the OFPPT website, which offers details on the content of each professional qualification.

The website of the department of higher education (MENFPESRS) publishes information on diplomas from all types of higher education institutions – public and private and establishments not dependent on universities. The same website publishes the updated list of the accredited programmes of private higher education institutions. However, a similar detailed list for public higher education institutions is not available on the website.
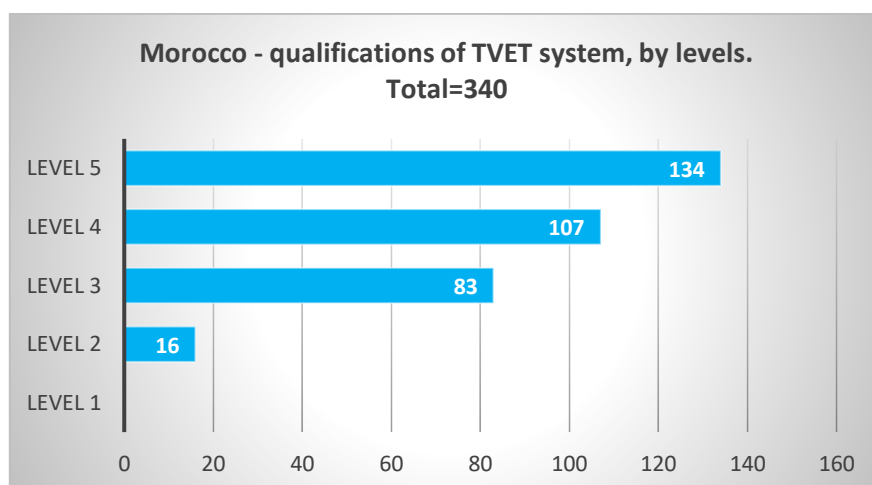
The Department of National Education created a separate Portal of BTS (Brevet de Technicien Supérieur – BTS). This portal contains information on the organisation of this qualification and its programmes. The BTS list of programmes indicates, without details on learning outcomes and organisation, the 22 programmes in two sectors leading to a BTS diploma.

The DFP website, on its Youth page, publishes information on available courses and qualifications, including: a) a detailed list of programmes of public providers, distributed by qualification levels and by region and b) a list of programmes of accredited private providers. Information on content and learning outcomes of these programmes and qualifications is not published on the website.
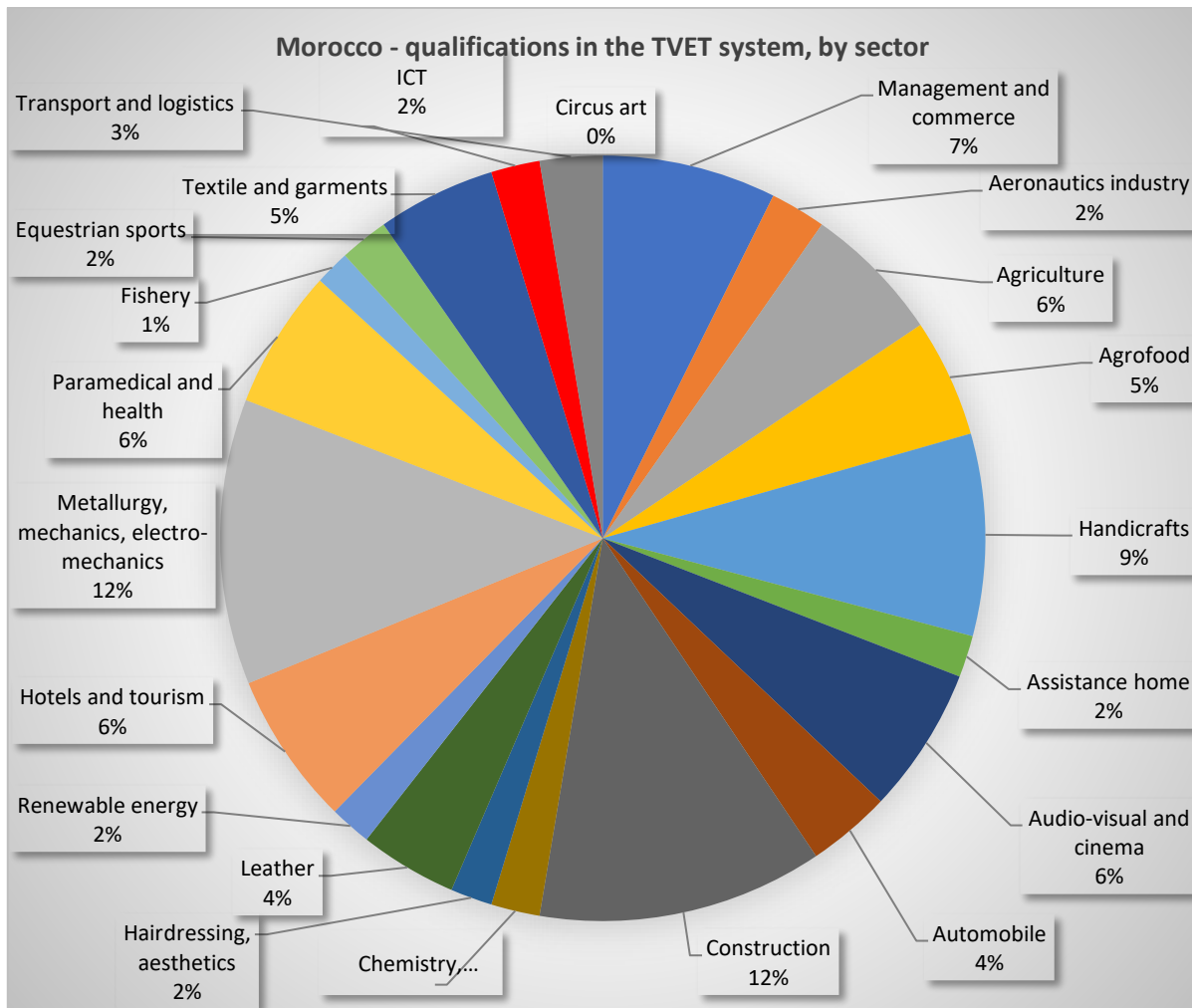
The *Space REM/REC* of the DFP website contains a (partial) list of REM and REC, which represent a reference base for programmes of the sub-system. All published REM/REC contain the full content (tasks, competences) and can be used as reference by any stakeholder. Until January 2020, a total of 716 REM and 815 REC had been developed for 18 sectors. In 2021 the new online register of all REM-REC, managed by ANAPEC, will be launched.

The website of the major public VET provider, OFPPT, offers easy access to complete and detailed information on the existing programmes and VET qualifications for both types of credentials, namely, a) diplomas and b) certificates of qualification. The page 'Find a training programme' ('Trouvez une formation') displays the full repertoire of all programmes and qualification levels – with concise information in standardised format on the occupational profile – learning outcomes, course organisation, occupations and training providers. For more details, see this example of the qualification 'Technician in Office Secretariat', of level Technicien Spécialisé.

Figure 1: Qualifications in the TVET register, by levels

Figure 2: Qualifications in the TVET register, by sectors

Morocco - qualifications in the TVET system, by sector

- ICT 2%
- Circus art 0%
- Management and commerce 7%
- Transport and logistics 3%
- Aeronautics industry 2%
- Textile and garments 5%
- Agriculture 6%
- Equestrian sports 2%
- Agrofood 5%
- Fishery 1%
- Handicrafts 9%
- Paramedical and health 6%
- Metallurgy, mechanics, electro-mechanics 12%
- Assistance home 2%
- Hotels and tourism 6%
- Audio-visual and cinema 6%
- Renewable energy 2%
- Leather 4%
- Automobile 4%
- Hairdressing, aesthetics 2%
- Chemistry, …
- Construction 12%

6.3 Qualification documents

The format of diplomas and certificates awarded based on accredited and quality-assured formal education and training is defined by the legislation.

6.4 Recognition of foreign qualifications

Information about the recognition of foreign qualifications in Morocco is available for users on the website of the MENESFPRS. E-equivalence is the new online recognition platform, permitting dematerialised, remote procedures.

The ANEAQ is responsible for the recognition of diplomas and degrees. Law no. 67-16 (22 September 2016) amending the provisions of Law no. 80-12 relating to the ANEAQ allows the agency to 'conduct expert work on applications for equivalency applications for graduate degrees'.

According to information gathered in September 2018, the majority of applicants are Moroccan students returning home and seeking either recognition of study periods abroad for the continuation of studies in Morocco or seeking public sector employment, which requires officially recognised diplomas. It is expected

that the future introduction of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) will allow more efficient recognition processes and practices.

Morocco is one of the four participating southern Mediterranean countries of the Meric-Network project.

Morocco's internationalisation strategy builds on improving links and cooperation with higher education institutions in the EU and Africa and supporting common efforts to strengthen vocational education and training with countries in Africa.

Morocco has cooperated with the EU and with sub-Saharan Africa on international students' mobility. A growing number of foreign students are registered in Moroccan higher education institutions. It is the first French-speaking African country to welcome African students (more than 75 per cent from sub-Saharan Africa) and the second overall, after South Africa.

7 Referencing to regional framework/ other frameworks

7.1 Referencing to regional frameworks

In the medium term, Morocco aspires to reference its NQF to the EQF. At the same time, the highest leadership has expressed a commitment to join and contribute to the activities of the African Continental Qualifications Framework (ACQF) development process and to work towards common objectives on qualifications in the continent.

The conceptual-technical design of the Moroccan NQF reveals the openness of the country to international developments, notably to the EQF and the Framework of Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.

7.2 International cooperation

Morocco cooperates with regional and cross-country initiatives and projects relevant for the NQF, notably with the ACQF project.

The ANEAQ is a member of the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAHE) and participates actively in the Africa-EU HAQAA initiative, including the piloting of ASG-QA.

7.3 International donor support

The EU is the major donor supporting VET modernisation in the context of the VET strategy, higher education and further expansion and quality of the alphabetisation policy and programmes in Morocco. The EU assists Morocco's labour migration policy through Towards a Holistic Approach to Labour Migration Governance and Labour Mobility in North Africa (THAMM), a regional project implemented by International Organisation for Migration in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt. Support to the employment policy and labour market intelligence is included in cooperation projects with the Ministry of Labour.

Other important bilateral partners contributing to Morocco's human capital policies include France, Germany and the United States.

8   Important lessons and future plans

The establishment of the new NQF operational institution with the necessary resources and management is likely to be a challenging undertaking, requiring time for negotiation after the elections of September 2021. The draft decree on the establishment of this new NQF structure has been in the consultation process since mid-2021 but was not approved before the elections. The new government confirmed on 7 October 2021 has split the previous unified MENFPESRS into two ministries: Ministry of higher education scientific research and innovation and Ministry of National Education Preschool and Sports. The Department of vocational education and training has moved under the responsibility of the Ministry of economic inclusion small enterprise employment and competences. At the moment of writing this update (October 2021) it is not yet known which of the indicated ministries will host the NQF operational structure.

The key building blocks enabling the operationalisation of the NQF are in place, namely, a) a supportive policy and legal basis and a reform strategy that recognises the role of the NQF for formal education and validation of competences from experience and non-formal learning; b) dynamic actions to establish the NQF operational institution in 2021, working in cooperation with the inter-stakeholders NQF Permanent Commission, and a budget to support NQF operations; c) a regulatory and technical-methodological framework underpinning the development, adoption and renewal of qualifications in all sub-systems of education and training; d) a functioning quality assurance system in higher education, but still developing in VET; and e) professional branches and an employers' confederation committed to good qualifications and a transparent qualifications framework.

Lessons from the decade-long dialogue and construction of the technical-institutional set-up of the NQF are valuable to guide the Permanent Commission and the NQF Operational Institution in the new phase starting in 2021. Lessons include the importance of flexibility, common vision, transparent partnership with professional organisations and the employers' confederation, evidence and experimentation and action for both quick wins and for medium-term results. Inertia during long periods of disruption of NQF dialogue and activities has high costs for the process, due to loss of know-how and of trust among the involved parties. The slow-down of NQF activities in the period 2017–19 has adversely affected progress, but in 2021 the country may benefit of a range of enablers of the NQF, if there is leadership and political will.

Moreover, a new and real opportunity for cooperation with NQFs in the EU emerged in 2021, thanks to the start-up of the pilot phase of the comparison of NQFs and regional qualification frameworks of other regions and continents with the EQF. Morocco is a pilot country for this comparison, conditional on criteria and procedures guiding the process. The operational capacity supporting NQF implementation is a major criterion to initiate the comparison roadmap.

Technical cooperation to support implementation of the NQF is guaranteed through the partnership with the EU. Ongoing projects with the DFP and ANAPEC supported the launch in 2020 of the national online repertoire of all professional training offer (all levels and modalities) and of the online register of REM-REC. The establishment of the national NQF institution is an essential premise for the planned EU twinning project to be prepared and launched.

The next steps will be necessarily intertwined with the recovery effort related to the Covid-19 pandemic. Morocco took measures to assure continuity of education and training through the period of Covid-19 confinement. As an illustration, in the sub-system of professional education, since mid-March 2020, the OFPPT prepared and made available online courses, including videos for practical classes on YouTube. All levels and types of training of OFPPT are accessible for online learning through an app and pedagogical materials will be gathered in a common platform. In the period of pandemic in 2020 the Ministry of Education created 6 000 pieces of digital teaching content, from a low baseline of only 600.

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10 ANNEXES

10.1 Annexure 1: REM/REC - updated list as of January 2020

Sector	Number of occupations	Number of fiches REM	Number of fiches REC	Partnership	Production period
1.Artisanat	182	150	150	- BGE	2018
2.Logistique	38	13	18	-	2017
3.Environnement	25	20	21	- BGE	2017
4.Eau/ Assainissement	22	22	25	- BGE	2017
5.Agriculture		40	42	- BGE	2017
6.Pêche Maritime		50	73	- BGE	2017
7.Transport	58	21	22	- BGE	2017
8.Agro-alimentaire	50	50	57	- SEFP (BGE)	2017
9.Tourisme/Hôtellerie		36	39	- Ministère de Tourisme-IFC (B. Mondiale) (Actualisation) - Meda2 – DFP	2015 2006-2008
10.Textile/Habillement/Cuir		34 8	64 -	- Meda2 – SEFP (Tex./Hab.) - SEFP /AFPA (Cuir)	2006-2008
11.TIC et ITO Offshoring		45	55	- BID- SEFP (Actualisation) - Meda2 – DFP	2010 2006-2008
12.IMME	73	60 13	66 -	- BGE - SEFP /AFPA	2019 2006-2008
13.BTP	108	60 18	74 20	- - SEFP /AFPA	2017 2006-2008
14.Aéronautique		08	08	- SEFP /UIMM	2010
15.Automobile		31	38	- SEFP /AFD (Actualisation) - SEFP /AFPA	2011 2009-2010
16.Commerce et distribution		20	21	- SEFP / Département de l'Industrie	2010

		15	19	- SEFP/ Ministère de l'Industrie	2012
et du Commerce					
7. Electronique		15	19	- SEFP/ Ministère de l'Industrie	2012
8. Gardiennage et transport de fonds		2	3	- SEFP /ANAPEC	2012
Total		**716**	**815**		

10.2 Annex 2: Professional education: programmes (qualifications) by sectors and level of qualification (2017-2018)

Source: CSEFRS, pg 113

	Specialisation	Qualification	Technician	Technician Specialist	**Total**
Management and commerce		6	9	10	**25**
Aeronautics industry			3	5	**8**
Agriculture		6	5	9	**20**
Agrofood		5	3	9	**17**
Handicrafts		14	9	6	**29**
Assistance home	1	3	1	1	**6**
Audio-visual and cinema	1	1	8	11	**21**
Automobile		1	3	8	**12**
Construction	6	12	9	14	**41**
Chemistry, plastics, mining		1	1	5	**7**
Hairdressing, aesthetics	2	3	1		**6**
Leather	3	4	5	2	**14**
Renewable energy				6	**6**
Hotels and tourism		5	7	10	**22**
Metallurgy, mechanics, electro-mechanics		13	16	12	**41**
Paramedical and health		2	5	13	**20**
Fishery		2	3		**5**
Equestrian sports	1		5	1	**7**
Textile and garments	2	5	7	3	**17**
ICT			3	4	**7**
Transport and logistics			4	5	**9**
Circus art					**0**
Total					**340**

10.3 Annex 6: Progression in professional education and links with national education

Source: Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation de la Formation et de la Recherche Scientifique (CSEFRS, 2019 a), Formation professionnelle initiale – Clés pour la refondation, Rapport Nr 4/2019, mars 2019. Pg 29.