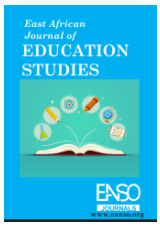

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Original Article

Enrollment of Trainees with Disabilities in TVET Programs in Nandi and Uasin-Gishu Counties, Kenya

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ABSTRACT

In Kenya, emphasis on skill-based learning is promoted through the establishment of the Vocational Technical Education and Training ACT (2013), which aims to promote vocational and technical-related skills. This study sought to determine the enrolment of trainees with disabilities in TVET programs in Nandi and Uasin-Gishu Counties. The research adopted a descriptive survey research design complemented by stratified and purposive sampling. Interviews and closed and open-ended questionnaires were used to gather information, while data analysis was done using frequencies and calculating percentages. The research assessed enrolment rates of trainees with disabilities. Data from 10 institutions were analysed via SPSS and revealed critical insights on inclusive education in TVET institutions in Nandi and Uasin Gishu Counties. The sampled institutions were categorised into: National Polytechnics, Technical Training Institutes (TTIs), and Technical and Vocational Colleges (TVCs). The results from the research indicated that enrolment rates for students with disabilities were disproportionately low, with only 228 students out of a population of 10,000 students who were enrolled. The low enrolment was attributed to inadequate physical facilities, assistive resources, and societal stigma. The study found out that students with various categories of disabilities were admitted to the TVET institutions in Nandi and Uasin Gishu Counties viz, physical disabilities, visual and hearing impairments. The study recommended enhanced investment in infrastructure, targeted training for staff, curriculum reforms, and robust policy implementation to create equitable learning environments for all students, aligning with Vision 2030 and worldwide goals of development. The findings of the study were important in reinforcing the implementation of relevant policies on inclusive education and promoting inclusivity among disabled trainees in vocational and skill-based institutions in Kenya.

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INTRODUCTION

Technical education is considered important in academic and vocational training, where it prepares learners for job markets that demand specialized skills. The specialized skills are offered through Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions, which equip students with practical knowledge, as observed by Keter (2018). According to Nasir et al. (2020), technical education provides the foundation for skill development, enabling learners to become proficient in self-employment and vocational courses. Trained manpower is fundamental to driving industrialization and economic growth (Afeti & Adubra, 2012). Therefore, technical education aims to prepare graduates for skilled professions, which in turn stimulates national economic development.

Over the years, African countries have increasingly recognized the critical role TVET plays in addressing the multidimensional economic needs of individuals, including employment opportunities. As stated by the African Union, "TVET delivery systems are well-positioned to train the skilled and entrepreneurial workforce that Africa needs to generate wealth and overcome poverty." (Union, 2007). Recent developments in skilled manpower have resulted in the alignment of the African Union's broader vision for "an integrated, peaceful, and prosperous Africa, driven by its people and taking its rightful place in the global community and knowledge economy" (Union, 2007). The Union has given cognisance of TVET as an essential tool for empowering young people economically and fostering self-reliance.

In its Plan of Action for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities (2010–2019), the African Union Commission identified persons with disabilities as an underserved and overlooked group requiring immediate attention from African governments and societies. Brewer (2013) observed, "The key to poverty alleviation is economic growth and the creation of employment for all. However, without employable skills, the poor cannot benefit from the growth process." Developing vocational skills, therefore, becomes a vital strategy for empowering marginalized groups and improving their livelihoods. Vocational education has become an important investment, contributing to the well-being of the citizens of countries by promoting growth, innovation, and enhancing skills and knowledge promoting the transfer of knowledge and skills (Mosebekoa, 2018).

People with disabilities in developing countries often face heightened vulnerability to poverty and dependence, exacerbated by limited access to education and vocational training, both considered basic rights. There is a well-documented link between disability and poverty: disability can lead to poverty, while poverty can exacerbate conditions that result in disability (Malle et al., 2015). In contrast, many developed countries have integrated disability issues into their development policies,

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viewing them as part of the broader human rights framework. Nonetheless, persons with disabilities often remain among the most marginalized groups globally. Progress has been witnessed skills skills-related education, as was witnessed during the launch of UNESCO's Vocation and Technical Education in 1990. One of UNESCO's goals emphasizes the importance of developing technical and vocational skills (Palmer, 2014; Wheeler, 2017).

Providing persons with disabilities opportunities to access TVET programs is essential for promoting empowerment. TVET systems in Africa vary widely in terms of delivery and education levels across different countries. Without adequate support, even when access is granted, the acquisition of skills and competencies for social and economic integration remains limited (Mpofu & Nyoni, 2022). In South Africa, Mosalagae (2021) notes that TVET institutions must adapt to meet the needs of trainees with disabilities, particularly regarding accessible infrastructure such as buildings, learning tools, and machinery. In Ethiopia, Malle et al. (2015) highlight the limited range of course offerings available to students with disabilities, further restricting their educational and vocational opportunities. Similarly, in Botswana, Mukhopadhyay and Moswela & Mukhopadhyay (2011) recommend a range of supportive interventions, including sign language interpreters, extended deadlines for assignments, enlarged font texts, Braille materials, and assistance for students with mobility challenges.

Statement of the Problem

Kenyan's Constitution, under Article 54, emphasizes the prevention of discrimination against disabled people and gives provisions in the Bill of Rights for Persons with Disabilities, ensuring access to facilities, adaptive equipment, and tools in their pursuit of academics (Opiyo, 2014). Additionally, the Persons with Disabilities Act of 2003, established the National Council of Persons with Disabilities, a statutory body for disabled people. The special needs provisions outlined in the Constitution focus on enabling access to assistive devices, such as sight-related devices and other appropriate means of communication. Furthermore, Article 18(1) of the Act agitates against discrimination against people living with disability when seeking admission to educational institutions in Kenya (Kramon & Posner, 2011). Despite these legal frameworks, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions in Kenya face challenges when effectively serving students having diverse needs. Some institutions fail to accommodate these students in terms of accessing equitable education.

Efforts to create a more inclusive environment in TVET institutions are underway, but obstacles persist. Students with physical impairments often face difficulty accessing specific training facilities, placing them at an academic disadvantage. Addressing inclusivity in TVET programs will not only make them accessible to disadvantaged groups but also prepare these students for future career opportunities and employment. Despite the constitutional provisions on inclusivity, many TVET institutions struggle to accommodate differently-abled trainees due to increasing enrollment driven by the 100% transition policy in Kenya's education sector. Inclusive education practices must be adopted to ensure that TVET institutions assist in combating discrimination against trainees with disabilities. This study will explore the most effective strategies for fostering inclusivity in TVET institutions in Uasin Gishu and Nandi counties, closing the gap in access for students with special educational needs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Technical and Vocational Education

Technical and vocational education (TVE) takes the form of knowledge and skills-related work, which extends to various economic and social sectors of life. This is manifested in learning that is either

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formal, non-formal, or informal methods of learning methods. To fulfil its intentions, TVE concentrates its efforts on learning and mastering specialized techniques and principles of science that underly techniques and the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and values. The workforce's strength in countries is determined by the countries' labour with skilled and semi-skilled labour, as opposed to a labour force that is not skilled. Subsequently, TVE becomes relevant by imparting employable and relevant life skills.

Historically in Kenya, skill-related education was often regarded as an alternative solution for trainees who were not able to secure vacancies in Universities (Kithae et al., 2017). Vocational education was even less favourably perceived, viewed as a pathway for those unable to pursue higher education, and seen as a potential failure. Starting from the year 2000, great concern has been given to the significance of TVET's role economic and national development of Kenya (Apunda et al., 2017). Consequently, TVET is seen as a key focus of the Kenyan government's development agenda. One of the primary aspects of TVET is its alignment with workforce needs and the acquisition of relevant skills. Since 2017, Kenya has implemented various plans and strategies that have significantly increased enrollment in technical and vocational training.

These initiatives include reducing school fees for technical and vocational institutions, establishing and equipping additional training facilities nationwide, and providing financial assistance and education loans.

Kenya's technical and vocational institutions belong to various categories: National Polytechnics, Technical Training Institutions, and Vocational Training Centers. Special Needs Technical and Vocational Institutions (SNTVIs) have been established to enhance the provision of training facilities for trainees with disabilities in TVET. However, many of these training institutions are situated within special schools and are therefore not classified under the TVET Act. In TVET colleges, trainees come from diverse backgrounds, encompassing various values, social norms, languages, disabilities, races, and family structures. Nevertheless, trainees are entitled to equal access to training opportunities. In countries that are developing, there is a need for the development of skills, and this is an important strategy for growth. Conversely, developed countries having economies that are young and underdeveloped economies will require development to enable them to be industrialized, as observed by Martinez-Fernandez & Choi (2013).

Enrollment of Trainees with disability in TVET Institutions

Individuals living with disabilities are challenged in their pursuit of academics and skills acquisition. According to the United Nations, as described in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, disabilities are attributed to physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments. These damages trigger barriers that inhibit full societal participation, as observed by Clifford (2011). The marginalized trainees living with disabilities in countries that are developing countries are bound to have inadequate skills as compared to their colleagues in developed countries. Therefore, there is an agreement on the need to promote Technical and Vocational Education and Training, which has an opportunity to expand opportunities for marginalized trainees (Murgor, 2018).

According to UNESCO (2009), an estimated 98% of children with special needs disabilities in least-developed countries do not attend school, resulting in significant gaps in basic literacy and numeracy skills. Worldwide, individuals with disabilities encounter stigma and barriers that hinder their full participation in skills training and employment programs. Many are deemed unqualified for work due to a lack of skills and societal discrimination, which prevents them from competing based on relevant qualifications or training. For individuals with disabilities, training that encompasses skills, knowledge, and attitudes is often essential for

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successfully securing employment. Many individuals with disabilities struggle to find jobs due to insufficient vocational training. This lack of training disproportionately affects women, making it more challenging for them to secure employment compared to men.

Supporting this notion, the International Labour Organization (ILO) (2013) identifies the promotion of vocational training as a key principle to include disabled people in employment. Vocational training prepares individuals for jobs requiring extensive practical experience and training, with fewer theoretical or academic prerequisites. Like their non-disabled counterparts, individuals with disabilities require skills to participate in economic activities; however, they often start from a disadvantaged position (Cologon, 2013). In many cases, families and communities perceive individuals with disabilities as unable to compete economically, which can limit their access to basic education and result in unqualified candidates for skills training courses. This lack of access fosters low self-esteem, reduced expectations, and limited achievements.

Market-oriented and appropriate technical and vocational training programs for individuals with disabilities have proven to be effective in enhancing their economic livelihoods worldwide. However, the functional limitations and support needs of individuals with disabilities vary significantly based on the type and severity of their impairments, making vocational training for them more complex compared to others (Murgor et al., 2014). Meanwhile, higher education has recently begun to incorporate individuals with disabilities, although many still face discriminatory policies and practices in institutions that claim to offer equal access and appropriate accommodations (Simpson, 2002).

When discussing disability, it is crucial to recognize the intersections of various factors such as gender, sexuality, class, poverty, and geographic context, particularly in developing countries. These factors not only impact individuals with disabilities but also contribute to higher rates of disability (Erevelles, 2014). The available resources and the geographical context of each country significantly influence how these barriers affect individuals with disabilities. Ultimately, "disability" is a social construct maintained by societal barriers, such as the absence of Braille translations in educational materials and schools lacking wheelchair ramps (Kipkoech et al., 2011).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey. As noted by Kombo and Tromp (2006) Descriptive surveys are the most effective research strategy for gathering insights into people's attitudes and beliefs regarding social issues and education. Orodho (2003) emphasizes that a descriptive survey allows researchers to collect information by administering questionnaires, and having discussions, enabling the assessment of the prevailing status within the population by comparing research variables. This design enhanced the study's efficiency by providing qualitative data and facilitating the examination of various characteristics of the respondents. The questionnaires were instrumental in helping the researcher determine how the independent and dependent variables are correlated.

Location of the Study

The research was conducted in the counties of Nandi and Uasin Gishu. Nandi County is located in Kenya's North Rift region. Nandi County has 6 Sub-Counties, and each of the sub-counties has a TVC institution. These are; Mosop (Kaiboi National Polytechnic), Emgwen (Emgwen Technical and Vocational Centre), Aldai(Aldai Technical Training Institute), Tinderet (Tindiret Technical and Vocational Institute), Nandi Hills (Ollesos Technical Training Institute), and Chesumei (Emsos Technical and Vocational Centre). Uasin Gishu has 6 sub-counties, namely Ainabkoi (Kipkabus TVC, Rift Valley TTI), Kapseret (The

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Eldoret National Polytechnic), Kesses, Moiben (Koshin TTI and Moiben TVC), Soy, and Turbo (Turbo TVC).

The study was carried out in public TVET institutions in Nandi and Uasin Gishu Counties. The public TVET institutions were purposely selected as the units of study because currently, the emphasis of the Kenyan government is a hundred percent transition to universities and other tertiary institutions, with TVET institutions given priority so as to promote vocational and employment skills. Nandi and Uasin Gishu Counties are located in the former Rift Valley province. Nandi County neighbours Kakamega, Vihiga, Kisumu, Kericho, and Uasin Gishu Counties. On the other hand, Uasin Gishu county neighbors; Kericho, Baringo, Elgeyo Marakwet, Trans Nzoia, Kakamega, and Nandi Counties.

Target Population

Population in research refers to targeted individuals possessing observable common characteristics; therefore, the population has the conformity of specific attributes. According to Bell (2014), a target population refers to a big sample of the population from which a proportion is picked to observe and carry out analysis. This study collected data from sampled TVET officers, principals, registrars, trainers, and trainees with disabilities in the sampled national Polytechnics, Technical Training Institutes, and vocational training institutes in Nandi and Uasin-Gishu counties.

Sampling and Sampling Technique

Sampling is selecting a specific number of participants from a designated population to form a representative sample is referred to as sampling. Most researchers agree that sampling error diminishes as the sample size increases (Orodho, 2003). The researcher utilized both clustered and purposive random sampling methods to ensure a fair sample selection. Data was collected from ten public technical and vocational training institutions, along with two national polytechnics in Nandi and Uasin-Gishu Counties, which were randomly selected. Subsequently, cluster and purposive sampling techniques were employed to choose 10 principals, 10 registrars, 10 trainers from the guidance and counselling department, and 300 trainees from the sampled institutions.

Table 1: Sample Frame

Respondent Category	Population	Sample	%
Principals	12	10	3.03
Trainers	350	10	3.03
Trainees	10000	300	90.91
Registrars	12	10	3.03
Total		330	100

Data Collection

During the field study, questionnaires and interview schedules were used to gather information. The closed-ended questionnaires and open-ended questionnaires were used in the study. Closed-ended questionnaires were designed to include a comprehensive list of alternatives, allowing respondents to select the option that most accurately reflected their situation. To accommodate responses that may not fit into the predefined categories, it is common practice to include an "Other" option for additional comments. The Principals' and Registrar's questionnaires elicited data on their perception of the promotion of inclusive education in their respective institutions, while the trainers' questionnaire assisted in collecting information on factors on inclusive education practices in the TVET institutions within the area of study. Further document analysis was also used to collect data

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which focused on published reports and records that documented how to accommodate trainees with special needs in the sampled TVET institutions. By critically evaluating these documents, the study aims to gain insights into the effectiveness and challenges of inclusive education practices as reflected in the institutions' implementation efforts. This comprehensive review will provide valuable context and support the overall findings of the research.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was facilitated by the use of Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel, enabling efficient handling and analysis of quantitative data, which was subsequently presented through percentages and tables for ease of interpretation. The results were presented in tables, and the percentages of enrolled students with disability were calculated. The results presented in the tables included: Student enrollment in the sampled institutions, the population of students with disabilities admitted, the various categories of disabilities, the study levels of the students, and the age brackets of the students.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The respondents were given questionnaires, however, not all administered questionnaires were completed. Some questionnaires were not filled and subsequently treated as incomplete and hence discarded, and therefore were not useful for data analysis. Moreover, an average of 86%, of 229 questionnaires, were filled out correctly. The response to the questionnaires is presented in Table 1.

Table 2: Questionnaire Response Rate

Respondent questionnaire	Sample	Actual response	Percentage
Principal	10	8	80%
Registrars	10	10	100%
Trainers	105	85	85%
Trainees	140	126	90%
Total	**265**	**229**	**86%**

Source; *Author (2024)*

As indicated in Table 2, the study achieved an average response rate of 229 (86%), a level deemed highly satisfactory for providing reliable and credible data. According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), a response rate exceeding 50% is generally considered adequate for meeting research objectives and addressing research hypotheses.

Enrollment of trainees with disabilities in TVET programs in Nandi and Uasin-Gishu Counties

Table 3: Student Enrolment

Population range	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
500-5000	2	11.1	11.1	11.1
5000-10000	15	83.3	83.3	94.4
>10000	1	5.6	5.6	100.0
Total	**18**	**100.0**	**100.0**	

Source: *Author (2024)*

The student enrollment numbers across various institutions are presented in Table 1, showing that a significant proportion (83.3%) of institutions had enrollments ranging from 5,000 to 10,000 students, while most institutions sampled were of a medium to large population. Only 11.1% of institutions fell

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within the 500 to 5,000 student range, suggesting that these were smaller institutions. A small percentage (5.6%) of institutions had enrollments exceeding 10,000 students, reflecting the presence of large-scale institutions with the capacity to accommodate a vast number of students. This enrollment distribution suggested a predominance of medium-sized institutions, with only a few institutions having very small or large enrollments.

Student with Disabilities Population

The number of disabled students in the different types of institutions sampled is presented in Table 3, categorized by type of disability. In National polytechnic institutions, the majority of disabled students had physical disabilities (87), categorized as visual (2) or hearing (3) impairments. Technical Training Institutes (TTIs) had a similar trend, with 70 students having physical disabilities, and fewer students with visual (3) or hearing (2) impairments. In Technical and Vocational Colleges (TVCs), the distribution was higher for students with visual (9) and hearing (6) impairments, with 46 students experiencing physical disabilities. Notably, none of the institutions reported students with mental disabilities or other types of disabilities, suggesting a potential gap in tracking or addressing certain types of impairments. This data indicates that physical disabilities were available across all institutions, with the highest concentration of such students in National institutions.

Table 4: Table Showing Enrolment of Students with Various Forms of Disabilities

Institution	Visual	Hearing	Physical	Mental	Others
National	2	3	87	0	0
TTI	3	2	70	0	0
TVC	9	6	46	0	0

Research on the enrolment of individuals with disabilities in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions indicated considerable obstacles and encouraging solutions to enhance inclusion. Studies have demonstrated that individuals with impairments encounter obstacles including but not limited to; physical inaccessibility, social stigma, insufficient awareness of disability rights, and inadequate support services in TVET programs (Hussain et al., 2022; Peele et al., 2020). Despite these limitations, some nations have implemented steps to boost enrolment rates through the introduction of disability-inclusive legislation, the development of adaptable curricula, and the improvement of physical accessibility (UNESCO, 2020). In Kenya and South Africa, legislative frameworks that promote special accommodations and inclusive teaching practices have demonstrated encouraging outcomes in enhancing access to TVET (Varghese & Panigrahi, 2022). Research also shows how important it is to educate administrators and teachers about disability inclusion, as this greatly enhances the learning environment for kids with disabilities (Munyaradzi et al., 2023). Overall, research indicates that combining structural accessibility enhancements, policy reform, and faculty training can improve the enrollment and retention of individuals with disabilities in TVET institutions, ultimately promoting their economic independence and empowerment (Lombardi et al., 2018).

CONCLUSION

The study found that the majority of TVET institutions surveyed reported a student population ranging from 5,000 to 10,000. This included both students with and without special needs, with 83% of the sampled institutions falling within this range. However, out of the total enrollment, only 228 students identified as having disabilities, highlighting a disproportionately low representation

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of students with disabilities in these institutions. This low enrollment would be due to the limited capacity of TVET institutions to provide the necessary facilities and support structures to accommodate students with special needs effectively. Specifically, the absence of accessible physical infrastructure, such as ramps and adaptive classrooms, hinders mobility and independence for students with physical disabilities (Kariamana, 2021). Additionally, the inadequacy of specialized services and resources, sign language interpreters, Braille materials, and assistive devices, restricts learning opportunities for students with sensory or cognitive disabilities (Kinyanjui, 2024).

The stigma and discrimination associated with disabilities in Kenyan society further discourage students with special needs from pursuing vocational training, compounded by financial burdens that many families face in providing necessary support, including transportation and assistive technology (Cheruiyot et al., 2024; Mwangi & Kiguru, 2023). While policies supporting inclusive education exist, inconsistent implementation across institutions leads to environments that fall short of the recommended standards, further limiting access and success for students with disabilities (Gikaria, 2020). Additionally, a lack of awareness about TVET pathways and inadequate training among educators in inclusive practices hinder full participation for these students, reducing their enrollment and retention rates (Munyi & Cheruiyot, 2019). Barriers such as transportation challenges and limited advocacy efforts continue to make TVET institutions less accessible and appealing for students with disabilities, underscoring the need for improved inclusivity efforts to support their educational advancement (Ressa, 2020, 2021).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Government officials, parents, and disabled youth themselves need to engage in awareness-raising campaigns to change perceptions about the abilities of disabled individuals. The promotion of positive role models and greater visibility of disabled people in vocational training can contribute to overcoming the stigma and biases that limit the admission of students with disabilities. The curriculum in TVET institutions must be restructured to meet the diverse needs of students with different disabilities. This involves creating specialized instructional methods, providing assistive technologies, and ensuring that learning materials are available in accessible formats. TVET programs should consider gender dynamics, as vocational training is often viewed as male-dominated, particularly in subjects like mathematics and science. Mainstream TVET institutions should also be equipped with the capacity to support the learning of students with disabilities, providing an inclusive educational experience. TVET institutions should place a greater emphasis on helping students with disabilities transition from education to employment.

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