



Values and Life Skills (VaLi) Working Group

# POLICY BRIEF

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**SUPPORTING YOUTH NOT IN  
EMPLOYMENT, EDUCATION AND  
TRAINING (NEET) TO ACCESS  
TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL  
EDUCATION AND TRAINING  
(TVET) IN KENYA**

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**Zizi Afrique**  
Foundation



# Policy Brief



**Supporting Youth not in Employment, Education and Training (NEET) to Access Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Kenya.**

*The Government has instituted various reforms leading to the expansion of the TVET subsector. County governments have the autonomy to provide financial support to Vocational Technical Centres (VTCs) and to influence expenditures in the VTCs (2010 Kenyan Constitution). In terms of financial resources, the support to TVET youth is commendable. However, not all TVET trainees receive government subsidies. Those who attend the lowest level of TVET, Vocational Training Centres (VTCs) do not receive any kind of support from government. Despite the growth in the TVET budget as a percentage of the total education budget over the last few years, the growing population in TVET institutions indicates a need for increased support from the national and county governments. In addition, the youth in VTCs do not have access to the Higher Education Loans Board (HELB)– facilities which ought to support all youth in TVET. Therefore, there is need to expand the scope of HELB coverage just as is the case with the private universities to ensure Youth NEET get access to TVET.*

## Introduction

**Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has undergone various reforms in the recent years initiated by the Kenyan Government through the Ministry of Education.** Some of the recent major reforms include the devolution of Vocational Technical Centres (VTCs) to the county levels, the introduction of the Competency Based Education and Training (CBET) curriculum, and reforms through Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2019 on A Policy Framework for Reforming Education, Training and Research for Sustainable Development. The CBET approach adopted in the TVET sector has introduced assessment based on competency. As such, candidates are assessed against set occupational standards in which they are categorized as being successful if they exhibit competencies in certain predetermined fields. The TVET sector has been identified as a key sector in helping economies to solve the rising rates of unemployment, especially among the youth (UNESCO, 2016). **Enrolment in TVET has been increasing over the years in Kenya.** The total enrollment in TVET institutions grew from 142,418 in 2015 to 476,202 in 2020 (Economic Survey, 2021). However, TVET enrollment by gender indicates disparity between the numbers of male and female trainees. In 2015, the number of male students in TVET institutions was 85,563 and grew to 258,084 by 2020. Female students' enrollment was still lagging behind with their numbers rising from 56,855 in 2015 to 193,121 in 2020 (Figure 1).

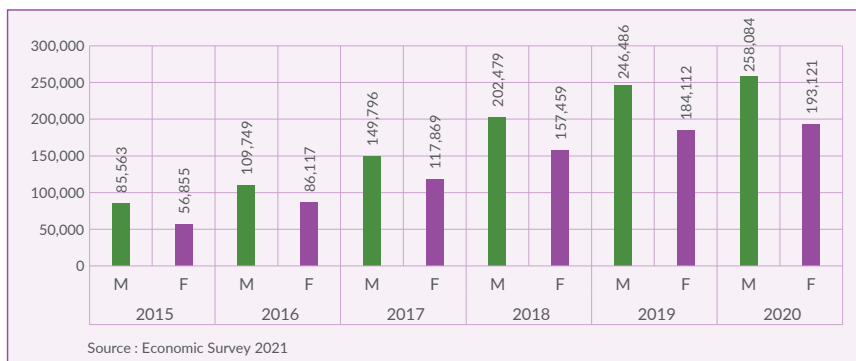


Figure 1: TVET Enrollment by Gender in Kenya

In the year 2020, majority (57%) of these students were in the Vocational Training Centres (149,701), followed by Public Technical and Vocational Colleges and National Polytechnics, with 130,064 and 87,115 respectively. About 84,325 were in private institutions (Figure 2). The upward enrollment in VTCs' enrollment can be attributed to the efforts of county governments in developing and improving existing VTCs infrastructure, introduction of curricula, in-service instructors, and in some counties, subsidization of fees. However, it is important to note that trainees who access VTCs and private institutions do not get any national government subsidy or HELB loans.

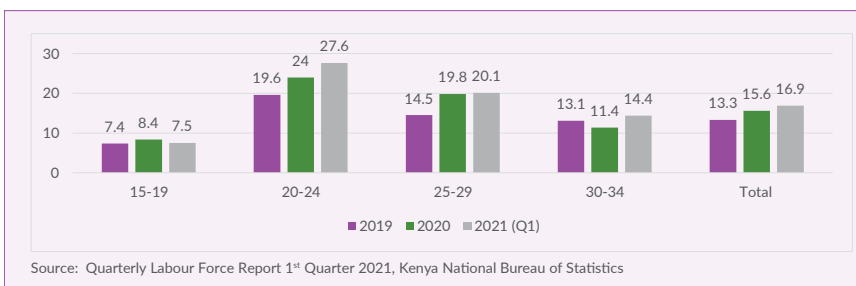


Figure 3: Percentage of Youth Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) by Age

The TVET budget, as a percentage of the total education budget,

increased between 2015/16 and 2019/20 but the sector spending as share of GDP was only 0.3%. The TVET budget, as a percentage of the total education budget, increased marginally in 2017/18 to 2.7% of the education budget from 2.5% the previous year. Further increases were in 2018/19 (to 3.7% of the education budget) and 2019/20 (to 5.4% of the education budget) (Table 1). The resources were utilized in the recruitment of training instructors, and in the construction, equipping and operationalization of new TVCs.

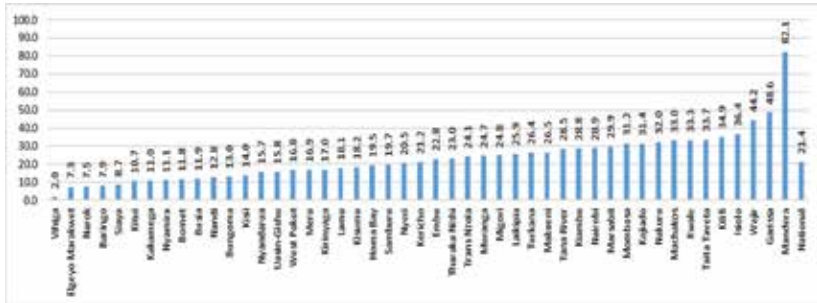
	TVET Budget (Million)	% of Education	% of GDP
2015/16	6,556.0	2.1	0.1
2016/17	8,226.0	2.5	0.1
2017/18	10,966.0	2.7	0.1
2018/19	17,023.0	3.7	0.2
2019/20	26,888.0	5.4	0.3

Source: Economic Survey, 2020/21

Table 1: TVET Budget and Share in Education in the Last Five Financial Years

It is important that the government placement program is well popularized especially among the Youth NEET. These youths who are willing to enroll to TVETs, especially in rural and marginalized areas, may not have this information about government-sponsored programs. Despite the government's interventions and mobilization, including reforms in TVET institutions, the country is still recording **high number of NEET youths who are not enrolled**. In the first quarter of 2021, 16.9 percent of youths (aged 15 to 34 years old) in Kenya were not in education, employment, or training (KNBS, 2021). In the preceding

quarter, the rate had been 18.1 percent. However, the number of young people who were no longer in school, working, or receiving professional training increased significantly from 16 percent in the first quarter of 2020 (KNBS, 2021). (Figure 3).



Although there are ongoing interventions to enhance access to TVET, including TVET capitation and HELB loan for the higher levels of TVET, training-related costs were cited as a major reason for stopping or not attending education and training in Kenya. Learning costs was cited by 39 percent of the respondents as the first major reason for being out of education and training. Across all the income groups (low, middle and high), education costs and parental discretion were the most important reasons for not attending school. Ancillary costs of education such as uniforms, provisions for boarders, and other school inputs are known to reduce student absence and dropout rates.

# Policy Recommendations

**Design programs and courses targeting Youth NEET.** The Kenya Youth Development Policy (2019)<sup>1</sup>, categorizes this group as a group of interest and states that there is need to invest in continuous skills development targeting this category. Therefore, revitalizing, streamlining and increasing resource allocation to vocational centres can be crucial in attracting this group of youth to acquire the skills necessary to create, through entrepreneurship or salaried employment. This could reduce the percentage of Youth NEET in the country. TVET stakeholders, especially the MoE, the State Department of Vocational and Technical Training (VTT), the County Governments and TVETA will need to come up with support channels and a framework that is inclusive of Youth NEET. This is possible since their key characteristics are now known: majority have secondary level of education, some have only primary level while a few have university education. They live mainly in the rural areas where majority of the VTCs are located. It will be important to expand the scope of skill training to include life skills and values in addition to vocational training and apprenticeship systems, literacy, numeracy, financial and information, and communication and technology literacy programmes in second-chance programmes targeting youth. This can be complemented by other second-chance programmes such as in informal education targeting out-of-school youth.

**Enhance use of well targeted financial support mechanisms including bursaries.** The importance of education cost in limiting education and training attendance suggests there is need to enhance the use of well

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1 Kenya Youth Development Policy(2019)



targeted support mechanisms and/or reduce the costs associated with schooling to reduce incidences of non-attendance of TVET and tertiary education. Currently, 57% of TVET trainees do not get any national government subsidy or HELB since they go to VTCs or private institutions. This needs to change.

**Initiate targeted communication strategies to curtail negative perceptions around TVET.** For most students graduating from secondary schools, TVET institutions are not a first priority for them given the low rates of enrollments to TVETs compared to enrollments in universities. Therefore, there is need for government and other stakeholders to come up with communication strategies that make TVET exciting and attractive to encourage many youths to choose it as one of their career options right from basic education level. Research has it that the youth benefit more from word-of-mouth communication as compared to other forms of communication. This should especially be explored when sharing information about TVET opportunities as well as in trying to change youth perspectives on TVET as a career path. This would mean making use of, but not limited to, announcements in places of worship, sports gatherings, village barazas, and youth meetings and forums in addition to online, use of radio, TV, social media and newspapers.

**Government placement jobs targeting TVET graduates.** While most youths are motivated by the goal of being financially stable, efforts by the government to ensure TVET graduates are absorbed in the labor market should be intensified. Research has it that employers prefer working with youth who have some level of experience. The government would expand the internship program which supports young graduates to access paid internships to youth in all levels of TVET. This should be possible if the responsible government ministries

and directorates as well as county governments directly engage the private sector including the Kenya Association of Manufacturers, the Kenya Private Sector Alliance, among other key players to come up with ways of encouraging them to provide internship opportunities to youth from all levels of TVET.

**Accessible and stable internet services and coverage.** Youths who have great exposure to social media were predicted to be 1.71 times more willing to enroll to TVET institutions compared to youths who did not have any social media exposure. This can be attributed to employers, trainers and training institutions resorting to the use of social media to advertise job opportunities. Most Youth NEET have no exposure to social media and this can be attributed to the high costs of internet and lack of access to strong internet especially in rural settings. Therefore, policies that ensure access, and regulation of costs of internet in the country need to be prioritized to help the youth gain access to information that they can leverage on and grow their skills. Provision of internet and digital services should be considered hand in hand with existing government services such as the government digital resource centres. As an example, the Kenya National Library Services (KNLS) are vital in the growth of the community. There is need to redesign the already existing information resource centres to be the epicenters where the disadvantaged members of the community like Youth NEET who have no access to internet and digital platforms can access internet as well as other government employment opportunities and related information and support. In rural areas where most NEET and TVET trainees are located, it would be ideal to also have stable and accessible internet and electricity to improve the utilization of such incentives offered by government. Through the “Last Mile” rural electrification programme, VTCs in rural areas are assured of connecting to electricity

thus increasing the likelihood of accessing internet connectivity.

**Making Access to TVET more accessible to Girls, Women and Youth With Disabilities.** Despite concerted efforts for gender equity, enrollment rates show that women and youth with disabilities are lagging behind in enrollment in TVETs. Therefore, government and all stakeholders should put emphasis on the importance of enrolling girls and women in TVETs. One of the key obstacles to girls and women enrollment in TVETs is child care. Both the national and county governments should come up with a strategy of ensuring TVET institutions are child-friendly. Having short courses and flexibility in the training schedule as well as providing child-care services in the institutions are some of the strategies the government and other stakeholders could consider so as to increase women's enrollment in TVETs. If both men and women have skills, then they will both participate in supporting their families and in the long-run, contribute to national development. Assistive devices could also be provided to youth with disabilities to enable them access TVET programmes.

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