

Policy Brief No 3 of 2025

Bridging the Skills Gap: The Urgent Need to Scale Up TVET

Overview:

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is a key driver of development, linking skills acquisition to employment, productivity, and the achievement of national development priorities. In Kenya, despite significant policy reforms and targeted investments in TVET, persistent enrolment gaps, gender disparities, and limited data on training outcomes continue to constrain the sector’s effectiveness. This calls for targeted policy interventions to expand the TVET subsector, address gender disparities, and strengthen evidence-based decision-making. This policy brief highlights the critical challenges facing TVET, the consequences of inaction, and actionable recommendations to ensure that skills development drives inclusive growth and industrial competitiveness.

Background:

Education and training are central to development, underpinning human capital formation, economic growth and population well-being. In this context, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is a critical pathway for translating education investments into labour market outcomes by equipping learners with practical, market-relevant skills that enhance employability, productivity, and inclusive growth.

Since 2010, the TVET sub-sector in Kenya has undergone significant transformation, driven by deliberate policy reforms and investments aimed at developing a skilled workforce to support the country’s industrial and economic growth. These efforts have led to an expansion in the number of TVET institutions, increased student enrolment, and reforms in curricula and governance frameworks, aligning the subsector with national development priorities under Vision 2030 and the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA).

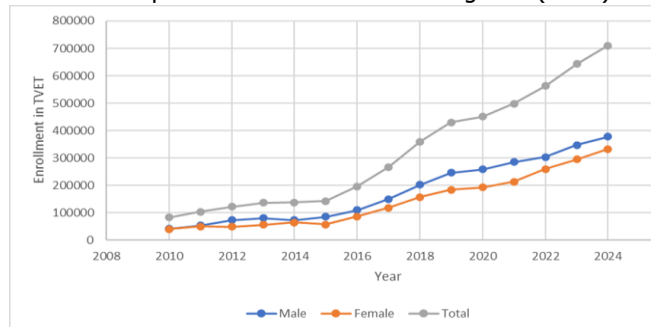


Figure 1. Trends in TVET Enrolment by Sex, 2010-2024
Source: Economic Survey Reports 2018-2024

Despite notable expansion and sustained policy focus in the country’s TVET sub-sector, enrolment remains below national and international benchmarks, pointing to persistent policy and implementation gaps in access, scale, and inclusivity. In addition, gender disparities and weaknesses in TVET data systems continue to constrain the sector’s ability to respond effectively to labour market needs. Together, these gaps underscore the need for targeted policy actions to scale up enrolment, promote equitable participation, and strengthen evidence-based planning to drive industrial and economic transformation.

Key Findings

TVET enrolment remains critically low relative to national industrialisation and skills demands. Based on international experience, achieving industrialisation requires at least 5% of the population to be enrolled in TVET programmes. Applied to Kenya, this benchmark translates to approximately 2.5 million learners, yet current enrolment remains less than a third of this level.

Female participation in TVET has increased from 40,680 in 2010 to 332,418 in 2024. However, it remains consistently below male participation levels and is particularly low in traditionally male-dominated fields such as engineering and technical disciplines.

Despite progress, TVET continues to face critical data gaps, particularly on training outcomes and their alignment with labour market needs, limiting evidence-based policy formulation, planning and resource allocation.

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Implications:

Low economic potential: The existing enrolment gap limits the country's ability to build a competitive, skills-driven economy and to absorb a growing working-age population into productive employment.

Underutilisation of human capital: Persistent gender imbalances constrain women's access to high-value skills and employment opportunities, undermining equity objectives and the full utilisation of the country's human capital.

Lost Demographic Dividend: Without sufficient and inclusive skills development pathways, the expanding youth population risks transitioning into unemployment or informal, low-productivity work rather than driving economic growth and industrial competitiveness.

Suboptimal decision-making: Failure to address critical data gaps risks misaligned skills development, ineffective decision-making, and inefficient use of resources.

Recommendations:

1. **Scale up TVET enrolment:** expand TVET participation to meet the country's development needs.
2. **Promote gender inclusivity in TVETS:** Implement interventions to ensure inclusive and equitable access to skills development opportunities across all sectors.
3. **Leverage the Demographic Dividend:** Invest in TVET to convert Kenya's growing working-age population into productive human capital that can drive economic transformation and reduce youth unemployment.
4. Strengthen data collection and management system for the TVET to inform policy and planning.

Conclusion:

Kenya can only achieve industrialisation, inclusive growth, and fully harness its demographic dividend if workforce skills and productivity meet the demands of a rapidly evolving job market and economy. Addressing low TVET enrolment, gender disparities, and critical data gaps is essential to ensure that policy reforms translate into tangible economic outcomes.

References

1. National Council for Population and Development (2025). Population Situation Analysis
2. Ministry of Education (2025). State Department for Technical, Vocational Education and Training Subsector Report. July 2022-June 2029

This Policy Brief is based on the Kenya Population Situational Analysis Report 2025.

Collaborating Organizations: National Council for Population and Development (NCPD), Population Studies and Research Institute (PSRI) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

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NCPD is a semi-autonomous government agency that formulates and promotes population policy and coordinates related activities for sustainable development in Kenya.

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