

## Marginalization of Trainers in Technical and Vocational Education and Training in Kenya

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### Abstract

*While TVET plays an invaluable role in the Kenyan economy, education at this level is still held in low esteem. Although many studies have focused on marginalization of the institution in general or the trainees therein, there are hardly any studies that focus on trainers' marginalization. This study is a narrative which focusses on global and local literature related to TVET trainer marginalization and possible remedies. TVET trainers in Kenya are marginalised in their professional development and training, in their recruitment into the profession, and even with respect to their scheme of service which is haphazard and not harmonised. This review utilises labelling theory to demonstrate how TVET trainers are marginalised, and how this may be remedied. A practical implication from the study is that there is need to stress on individual and institutional initiatives so as to mitigate TVET trainer marginalization. Individuals can, for example, utilise social media avenues for professional development so as to improve their pedagogy and other training-related aspects. Socially, the society plays an important role in labelling theory. In this regard, TVET trainers' marginalization can be mitigated with active involvement of members of the society who can help paint a positive image of these institutions, their trainers and trainees..*

**Keywords:** TVET Trainers; Kenya; Marginalization; Pedagogy; Professional Development; Collaboration; Partnership; Scheme of Service

## Introduction

As is the case in many global economies, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in Kenya plays an invaluable role in the nation. Specifically, TVET is considered an important contributor in the realization of Vision 2030, which focusses on transforming the country into ‘a newly-industrializing, middle income country providing a high quality of life to all its citizens in a clean and secure environment’ (Akala & Changilwa, 2018; The National Treasury and Economy Planning, 2022, para. 1). Since the percentage of students joining universities is smaller, TVET in Kenya absorbs many students from high school, and is focused on the preparation of practical-oriented graduates who are destined for the manufacturing and other technical sectors (Wakiaga, 2017). However, TVET sector in Kenya faces many challenges that threaten their effective contribution to the economy of the nation, chief among them being marginalization of education provided at this level.

Generally, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is focused on the study of technologies and related sciences, and the acquisition of practical skills, attitudes, and knowledge relating to occupants in various sectors of economic and social life (UNESCO, 2021; Tripney et al., 2013). TVET also involves the development of skills and opportunities aligned to national and local contexts. TVET is globally recognised as an important form of training because it provides learners with skills to build their individual capabilities, which they use for self-development and to engage in productive activities. Indeed, Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG) on equitable quality education Target 4.3 requires that by 2030, countries achieve equal access and quality technical vocational for all women and men (United Nations, 2020). Similarly, the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063 has ratified the continental strategy for Technical and Vocational Education and Training to foster youth employment and entrepreneurship.

Across the globe, TVET is credited with socio-economic development, and is also a solution to youth unemployment. According to Hilal (2019), TVET is instrumental in fragile states such as Palestine as it contributes to the development of such states specifically through employment of TVET graduates and consequently aiding the reduction in poverty rates in Palestine. Sifuna (2020) argued that TVET is a solution to youth unemployment, which is a characteristic of many developing countries, implying that this level of education and training requires attention and investment in. However, ensuring good governance in TVET is a difficult task as it is a complex policy area located at the intersection of education, training, and social-economic and labour market policies (European Training Foundation, 2019). There are countries where governance and financing of TVET is under one body to enhance efficiency in the achievement of objectives. These include Malaysia, Thailand, and the Philippines. In some cases, the governance of TVET is under public-private partnerships. The industry is also fully involved in developing training and competency standards and regulations in curricula, qualification of trainers, tools, available equipment, and training facilities.

In Kenya, TVET has gained increased attention and popularity and is prioritised under Vision 2030 as a form of education and training that will provide the youth with the necessary skills required for the job market and economic development (GoK, 2008). TVET in Kenya is under the Ministry of Education, State Department for TVET. Kenya has ratified both the SDGs and the Agenda 2063. Furthermore, the Constitution of Kenya, Article 55 (2), provides youth the right to access relevant education and training.

Schedule Four also provides for the establishment and management of village polytechnics by the 47 county governments. In this regard, Kenya is investing in TVET to impart relevant skills to Kenyan youth.

However, while TVET is foundational to the success of economies and especially in the Global South, it is often looked down upon, and this affects its enrolment and quality of programmes, as well as its general outlook. According to Aldossari (2020), as well as Hao and Pilz (2021), TVET education is stigmatized and marginalized across the globe as it is considered inferior compared to university education. In Kenya, Karani and Waiganjo (2022) observed that TVET is considered the domain of ‘academic dwarfs’ suggesting that there is disdain for education and training offered at this level, yet on the contrary, this is the suggested solution to socio-economic development for countries such as Kenya. Notably, university education has traditionally been hailed as the hallmark of higher education, with those joining TVET institutions considered either less qualified or academically inferior.

Although studies have focussed on TVET education and even how they are marginalised in contexts such as Kenya (Akala & Changilwa, 2018; Sifuna, 2020), not much has discussed the marginalization of trainers at this level of education in the country. To this end, this study focuses on the marginalization of trainers in TVET institutions in Kenya and will delve into ways in which this marginalization occurs, and also suggest possible remedies to this challenge. The study took a narrative review approach which is often focussed on a given area of study and guided by clear-cut stated research questions (Gregory & Denniss, 2018). Thus, the guiding questions in this study are:

- How are TVET trainers in Kenya marginalized?
- What are the possible remedies to this marginalization?

The rest of the study will be structured as follows: the next section discusses the background of TVET in Kenya, followed by a discussion of labelling theory (which guides the study), and thereafter a review of literature based on the study objectives. The conclusion and implications will then be presented last.

### **Background: TVET Growth and Development In Kenya**

TVET in Kenya can be traced to the pre-colonial era in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. According to Osumbah and Wekesa (2023), TVET was introduced to provide skilled labor to the colonial masters in the country; this, however, caused this kind of education to be viewed with disdain over time, and more so after independence. Even after independence, TVET was retained in the education system as it was thought a solution to youth unemployment. In this regard, Muyaka and Kitainge (2021, p. 68) observed that:

When Kenya attained independence, the demand for skilled manpower skyrocketed. The TVET institutions then could not satisfy the appetite that was fuelled by the growing opportunities in both informal and formal sectors. Consequently, the government established Institutes of Technology (ITs) and targeted an institute in each of the former eight provinces. This was to open more spaces for enhanced access to TVET institutions

This suggests that TVET institutions continued growing after independence as the need to absorb mores learners from secondary schools increased.

Ngure (2022) observed that the TVET curricula and education have been affected by the various commission and task forces in the country and have been revised from time to time. The latest reforms (competency-based curriculum) have advocated for competency-based education and training at TVET levels, which seeks to engender a practical orientation to the courses offered to the learners.

Over the years, TVET institutions in Kenya have been increasing, with more learners being enrolled for different courses. Table 1.1 shows the number of TVET institutions in Kenya by category for the period 2017-2021. Ngure (2022) credits the growth of this sector to the different players involved with the TVET [such as Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), Kenya Accountants and Secretaries National Examination Board (KASNEB), National Industrial Training Authority (NITA), among others], as well as the increased internal and external funding to this sector.

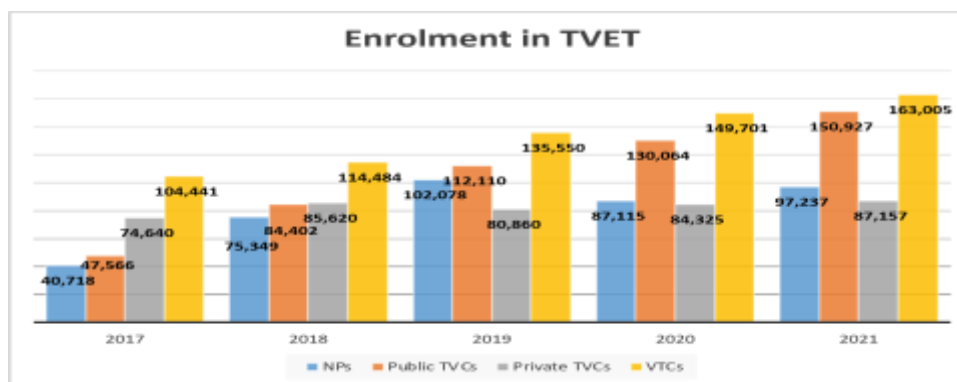
*Table 1: Number of TVET institutions by category, 2017-2021*

Category	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Public Vocational Training Centres (VTC)	899	982	1,149	1,156	1,156
Private Vocational Training Centres	47	47	47	83	88
Public Technical and Vocational Colleges (TVC)	91	101	191	230	255
Private Technical and Vocational Colleges	627	628	742	820	885
National Polytechnics	10	10	10	11	11
Kenya School of TVET formerly KTTC	1	1	1	1	1
Total	1,962	1,769	2,140	2,301	2,396

Source: Economic survey (2022)

Table 1.1 indicates different levels of institutions offering TVET. The Technical and Vocational Colleges, National Polytechnics, and Technical Universities have distinct specialised areas and skills they train on.

The Economic survey reports (2017-2021), as indicated in Figure 1.1 below, reveals a 250% increase in trainee enrolment in TVET. However, this high enrolment is not matched with the increased recruitment of trainers in TVETs. According to the MoE status report, 2022, the approved enrolment capacity of public TVET institutions under MoE as of December 2022 was 164,388, while the actual enrolment was 318,179, translating to an over-enrolment of 153,791 (93.6%).



*Figure 1: Enrolment in TVET*

Source: Economic Survey (2022)

## Labelling Theory

The premise of labelling theory is the argument that individuals behave as per the labels they are given (Becker, 1963). Specifically, this theory has been used to examine the labels such as those given to deviants (i.e. criminals and wrongdoers in the society), and the consequences of such labels. Labelling could be formal (i.e. by institutions) or informal (by people in society), yet these still have effects on the people labelled in society (Berk, 2015). It has been established that individuals who experience repeat crimes are those for whom certain labels have been put on them, and reinforced by societal institutions, for example labels such as ‘prisoners’, ‘juvenile delinquent’, etc. (Kavish, Mullins, & Soto, 2016). This suggests that labels have effects on those that are labelled so, since they often internalize these labels and make them part of their identity.

In many third world countries, the dream of many young people is to join universities, and when this is not attained, many such individuals consider themselves as ‘failures’ as TVET institutions are considered the haven of individuals with low academic qualifications (Hao & Pilz, 2021). Joining Technical and Vocational Training Institutes seem to further reinforce this ‘failure’ or ‘low achiever’ label, and this may cause many such individuals to struggle in their academic work, or even have a low self-esteem about themselves. Buthelezi (2018) noted that in South Africa, when students in TVET abuse drugs or engage in other unbecoming behaviour, they further reinforce the negative stereotype associated with such institutions. This suggests that a negative perception exists of these institutions, and any negative happening is judged harshly by the society as compared to universities.

Although it may be easy and ‘obvious’ to see how learners at TVET levels are labelled of even self-label as inferior (Aldossari, 2020; Hao & Pilz, 2021), the case for trainers is not always the same. Through the lens of labelling theory, however, this study seeks to examine how TVET trainers are marginalised, and how this affects their esteem and work in general.

## How TVET Trainers In Kenya Are Marginalised

### *Professional development and training*

A key component of effective learning which leads to the attainment of educational goals and objectives is the presence of quality teachers, which is a product of effective professional development and training. Experts in teachers’ professional development such as Darling-Hammond (2000), and more recently Howard and Milner (2021), have argued that having well-prepared and trained teachers have stronger effects on the attainment of learners’ objectives, and this outweighs the effects brought about by learners’ characteristics such as their socio-economic backgrounds. This implies that professional development and training of trainers at the TVET level need to be given serious consideration with the aim of enhancing learners’ attainment of the stated learning objectives.

Unfortunately, many TVET trainers in Kenya are marginalised as far as professional development and training is concerned; many also lack pedagogical skills. According to Akala and Changilwa (2018), most TVET trainers are inadequately trained with respect to quality technical and practical orientation that is expected for teachers at TVET levels in the country. As a result, many end up becoming ineffective in their pedagogy which affects the practical orientation of technical courses offered at TVET institutions. In

Kenya, while the professional development and training for primary and secondary school teachers is clearly outlined and offered by colleges and universities across the country, one for TVET trainers has not been streamlined. Most trainers in TVET institutions in Kenya are those who took technical courses in universities, and some (a lucky lot) are science-based graduates from Kenyan universities. Teaching in TVET is therefore more of a ‘default’ than an intentional opportunity for the trainers, thus their marginalization in this regard. Zinn, Raisch, and Reimann (2019), whose study was on TVET trainers in South Africa, noted that many of them were professionally inadequate owing to the less training they had received, and this was bound to reflect in the learners they were releasing to the job market.

### TVET Trainers’ Recruitment

Paryono (2015) observed that in the Asian context, while TVET is instrumental in the progress of the Asian nations, the recruitment and general quality-related issues on TVET trainers is still a challenge. Although some of the Asian countries in Paryono’s study such as Brunei recruited TVET trainers from industry, other countries such as Malaysia had an open policy of recruiting the best skilful and vocational teachers, and had a strategy of introducing recruitment method for TVET teachers. Apparent challenges however were inadequate training or qualifications among potential TVET trainers, and lack of a coordinated approach to recruitment. In Kenya, there is a lack of standardized ‘gauge’ or yardstick for recruitment among TVET trainers, which although it gives institutions in this category the liberty to hire their own teaching staff, this gap contributes to lack of harmonization among TVET trainers. At present, recruitment of TVET trainers is not harmonised; the Public Service Commission (PSC) recruits for the institutions under MoE, while other ministries, private institutions, and County Governments recruit on their own.

In Kenya, the current establishment of trainers in public TVET institutions under the Ministry of Education (MoE) is 6,205, servicing an enrolment of 318,179 trainees, while the recommended ratio of trainer-to-trainee in STEM and business-related courses is 1:20 and 1:30 respectively (TVETA, 2021). With regard to TVET, this implies that about 15,022 trainers are required in the country today. There is, therefore, a shortage of 8,817, meaning additional staff are required for effective curriculum implementation. Table 1.2 shows the current trainer-trainee ratios in public TVET institutions under MoE.

*Table 2: Trainer-Trainee Ratio in Public TVET Institutions*

Courses	Enrolment as at December 2022	No of PSCK Trainers	Trainer: trainees Ratio	Recommended Trainer: trainee Ratio	Required PSCK trainers
Business/Liberal Studies	53,292	956	1:74	1:30	1,777
STEM	264,887	5,249	1:50	1:20	13,245
Total	318,179	6,205			15,022

Source: MoE (2021)

TVET trainers are crucial for developing technical skills among the trainees who later get into different sectors of the economy. This means the quality of TVET graduates also highly depends on the quality of TVET trainers. This raises the need to develop a structure of qualifying TVET trainers in line with the sector requirements.



### **Scheme of Service for TVET Trainers**

A scheme of service exists for most professions and is a guide for how they work and their consequent remuneration. In Brunei, Paryono (2015) argued that a new scheme of service was necessary to attract and retain trainers at TVET levels. In relation to this, a study in Kenya by Wahungu, Wawire, and Kirimi (2023) among trainers and TVET directors revealed that scheme of service among such trainers was missing but necessary. This implies that TVET trainers may feel marginalised as they do not have a workable scheme of service as compared to their counterparts at other levels (such as secondary schools) or even those in other professions.

The scheme of service for TVET trainers in itself has new challenges as those recruited by PSC and other Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs) have a clear scheme of service but those managed by Councils/Boards, County Governments, and the private sector do not have a harmonised scheme of service. Notably, in 2008, more than 7,000 trainers who were serving in national polytechnics, technical training institutes and youth polytechnics across the country under the employment of The Teachers Service Commission (TSC), were transferred to the Public Service Commission (PSC) (Ugfacts, 2021). Although this was a celebrated move and good news to trainers as this transition was to address promotions and appointments to the next job groups especially for trainers who had served in particular job groups for a number of years without being promoted while their counterparts in secondary schools had a smooth progression to higher pay grade. Though the transition took place gradually, not all trainers were moved at the time of massive transfers from TSC to PSC. Since then, there has not been an operational scheme of service for TVET trainers because Trainers were co-opted into the existing PSC scheme of service. Instead, there have been policies in place which were to guide in promotion of trainers.

### **Possible Remedies to TVET Trainer Marginalization**

#### **Retooling TVET Trainers**

Since most TVET trainers enter the scheme when ill-equipped to teach at these institutions, it is imperative that intentional, harmonised and regular professional development opportunities are offered to such professionals so as to enhance teaching quality. The recent COVID-19 pandemic showed that it was possible for teachers across the board to adopt digital platforms to enhance their teaching and learning processes. In Kenya, while online teaching and learning was a challenge for many TVET institutions, retooling teachers can be one of the ways to enhance their professional development, as Karani and Waiganjo (2022, p. 115) observed:

... teachers' professional development should be enhanced to allow retooling of TVET teachers in the use of digital tools to enable them to adjust in the teaching and learning process. The professional development for teachers should be a continuous programme to give support to the teachers as they adopt new ways of teaching.

The foregoing observation suggests that TVET trainers need retooling, which should not be a one-off session, but a regular one which will help equip them with appropriate skills and tools for their sessions, as well as keep abreast of the continuous changes in the sector.

As adult learners who are aware of their learning needs, TVET teachers can also take charge of their ongoing professional development (Njenga, 2018) which will complement that which is offered by their institutions or other relevant bodies. For example, internet uptake and penetration in Kenya is quite high, and this can be opportunities for trainers to take enhance their professional development through social media platforms, among others. Teachers in Kenya have been known to enhance their professional development through social media avenues such as Facebook, WhatsApp, among others (Bett & Makewa, 2020), which can also work for TVET trainers.

Sustainable Development Goal four does not just emphasize quality learning at all levels of learning, it also seeks to engender lifelong learning among individuals (United Nations, 2020). Quality learning can be enhanced at TVET levels when lifelong learning is enhanced among trainers, and while this can be an individual's undertaking, institutional approach is bound to be more rewarding. Kanwar, Balasubramanian, and Carr (2019, p. 56) argued that in the face of ubiquitous technology, learning in TVET ought to progress from andragogy (self-directed learning) to heutagogy (autonomous and self-directed learning) which 'places learning in the hands of the learner, who decides not only when and how they learn, but what they learn'. This implies that trainers' pedagogical skills ought to be upskilled in tandem with the changing global changes and development.

### **Increased Collaborations and Partners**

One of the catalysts of success of TVET institutions is collaboration with both public and private bodies within and outside the country, and this will enhance cooperation, exchange of programmes and other resources in a way that is helpful to them. Musyimi et al. (2018), who studied the Kenya-China cooperation in the TVET project, revealed that this collaboration had enhanced learning among both trainers and trainees, with learners getting study and work opportunities abroad, while their trainers benefitted from new technological skills. The collaboration also benefitted the participating institutions and the Kenyan ones received better technological equipment that would help make learning more practical. This suggests that collaboration and partnership with relevant institutions can help reduce marginalization of trainers and trainees while uplifting the image of their institution.

TVET should also partner with the industry in order to acquaint their trainers with updated skills and knowledge that can boost their pedagogy and latest knowledge and research in their fields. Roslyn et al. (2019) argued that collaboration and partnerships between TVET stakeholder such as the TVET institutions themselves, government bodies, with industry partners is helpful in upskilling the TVET trainers, hence making them better instructors of their learners. Further, Oviawe (2018) argued for the need for public-private partnerships for TVET institutions in order for them to realize their potential and produce graduates who are responsive to the market needs. In this regard, TVET located in developing contexts could consider partnering in the area of certification with established bodies such as City and Guilds Certificate of London Institute, which is not only established but reputable, and this will help sharpen the skills of the TVET trainers.



## Conclusion and Implications

Literature demonstrates that TVET learning is largely despised and considered a specialization of low achievers, which unfortunately is not the case. As a result of this disdain, most TVET trainers find themselves in precarious position as they try to balance their professional standing while at the same time meeting the needs of their learners. TVET trainers in Kenya often find themselves marginalised with limited opportunities for professional development, haphazard recruitment and training procedures, non-existent scheme of service, among others. When this is coupled with the challenges such as inadequate infrastructure that characterise most TVET institutions in Kenya (Akala & Changilwa, 2018; Sifuna, 2020), the end result is a demotivated trainers and half-baked graduates.

As labelling theory suggests, labels could be formal or informal, yet they may demoralize an individual if they are negative (Bernburg, 2019; Kavish, Mullins, & Soto, 2016). The challenges that TVET trainers face is a cocktail of both formal and informal labelling, and this contribute to a discouraging working environment. A beginning point would therefore to examine societal labelling of TVET trainers and their trainees with respect to possible effect this has on them. Seminars and workshops must be held to help demystify TVET study while emphasizing their crucial role in the economy. Through this way, individuals are likely to be more appreciative of the trainers and the work they do. It is also necessary that such trainers are given opportunities for retooling, through both digital and face-to-face training sessions, and this can happen as they continue training their apprentices. Further, collaboration and partnerships with other institutions, industry and even private bodies can go a long way in enhancing the skills and expertise of the trainers; this can mitigate the effects of the marginalization they experience.

Retooling the TVET trainer and enhancing opportunities for collaboration and partnerships will require the efforts of the individual TVET trainer, their institutions, and other key stakeholders such as the Kenyan Government. While individuals can take initiatives that can be fruitful, their institutions can forge partnerships with potential funders or research partners. The Government can similarly enter into partnership with foreign governments which can fund and provide learning opportunities for TVET trainers, and in this way, reduce the marginalization levelled at them.

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