

# The GLOCEPS

## Weekly Influential Brief

Research and Analysis in Governance and Ethics Pillar

### Revitalizing Kenya's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET): Lessons from China

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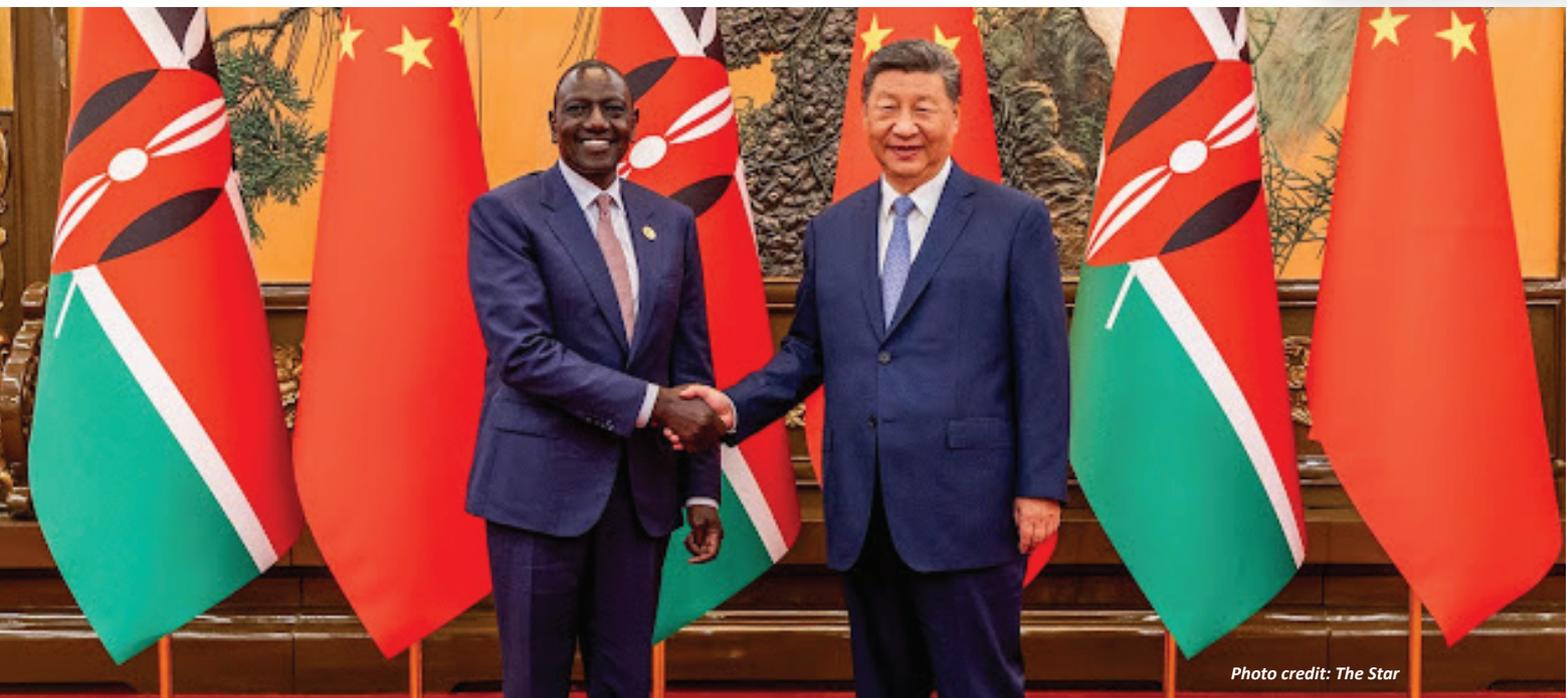


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#### Executive Summary

The brief articulates that pivoting Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) towards the junior school and specific economic needs and potentials of counties is vital in enhancing the quality of its outcomes in Kenya and the Eastern Africa region. Borrowing from China's vocational and technical training, there exist viable strategic options to strengthen Kenya's TVETs. These lie in introducing multiple entry points for TVET systems right from elementary levels; tailoring programs to regional economic activities; and deepening cooperation among industrial enterprises and

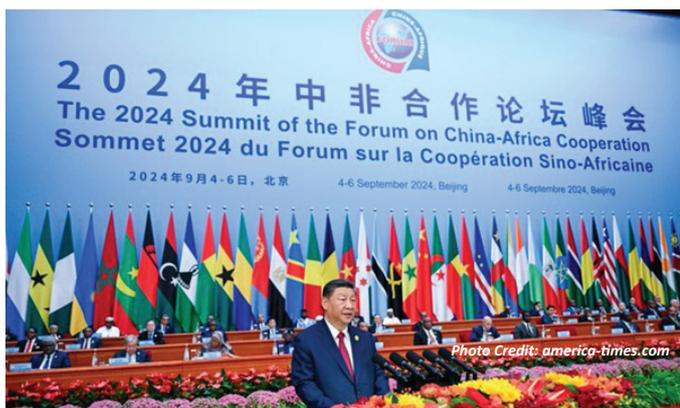
TVET institutions. The brief concludes that the institutions' curriculum should mirror Kenya's national and county socio-economic development blueprints. Key recommendations include operationalizing the 2025-2027 China-Africa science and education partnership initiative for people-to-people exchanges; introduction of TVETs at elementary levels in junior secondary schools; reviewing the TVET curriculum to make it more focused on empowering county-based socio-economic activities; and synergizing cooperation between TVET institutions and the industry.



## Context

The draft TVET policy (March 2014) provides a policy framework for achieving a harmonized and coordinated approach to post-school training and the development of skilled manpower needed to drive the aspirations of Vision 2030. The policy targets an ambitious gross enrollment rate of 30% by the year 2030. Equally, the TVET Act No. 29 of 2013 and the Kenya Qualifications Framework (KQF) offer regulation, coordination, and promotion of TVET institutions in Kenya to ensure they meet international standards.

The Beijing Summit and the 9th Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) proposed initiatives for strengthening people to people cooperation through vocational and technology training partnerships between China and Africa. There exist prospects for Kenya to pursue a first mover advantage in operationalizing the 2025-2027 science and education partnership initiative for people-to-people exchanges. The China-Africa science and education cooperation, through establishment of China-Africa regional cooperation centers for digital education was identified as a collaborative initiative for people to people exchanges. This was among priority areas that Chinese government identified to support Africa for the next three years during the Beijing Summit held from September 4th to 6th, 2024.



Equally, during the 8th Forum on FOCAC in 2021, Chinese President Xi Jinping promised to scale up the TVETs sector in Africa. In 2022, Africa and China entered into a partnership to improve the technical and professional ability of TVET administrators and trainers in Africa technological training institutes. The China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE) and the Association of Technical Universities and Polytechnics in Africa (ATUPA) agreed to co-implement an online and offline training program to upscale the level of technical training in the continent in line with labor demands. The transnational vocational training program was poised to strengthen Sino-African vocational education cooperation by sharing the Chinese TVET experience with the world.

Even though industrial and economic differences between the Eastern African countries and China exist, there are sustainable lessons that regional vocational training institutions can draw from China's experience. One of the vital international collaboration initiatives is the Africa-China World Bank Education Partnership Forum on TVETs which offers platforms for stronger partnership efforts between some of China's best-ranking TVET centers and industries and African TVET institutions. It was initiated in 2017 to provide partnerships between leading universities, vocational education institutions, and the private sector in both East Asia and Africa through its annual meetings.

On 2nd November 2023, Eastern Africa countries validated and adopted the Regional Framework for Occupational Competency Assessment and Certification (RFOCAC) and the Regional Policy Framework for TVET Integration (RPFTI). This was to provide a policy framework for the establishment of harmonized and standardized occupational competency assessment and certification systems for the institutions in the region. However, unlike





Eastern Africa and Africa's vocational models of education, Chinese TVET promotes progression between TVET, general, and higher education. It also supports vertical and horizontal mobility and advancement between different qualification levels.

## Key Issues

The following initiatives remain crucial in enhancing the quality of Kenya's TVET system.



## The Chinese multi-entry TVET education model

The structure of TVET in China has multiple entry points that ensure flexibility and allow students to enter and progress at different levels. The system also offers continuous education pathways from elementary to higher learning levels. The model offers conduits for progressive specialization based on individual competencies and interests. It also gives room to upgrade to a higher level under the condition of passing an entrance examination. The different education levels include junior secondary TVET, senior secondary TVET including vocational senior secondary school, and higher TVET, which includes higher vocational colleges and technical colleges. Unlike other countries, vocational education and technical education are domiciled under different ministries. The vocational education is oriented to enhancing student knowledge and academic background while technical education is oriented to educating students' skill development and addressing employment issues. This contrasts

with the systems in Kenya and other African countries that have only one level of tertiary education for TVETs.

Historical data shows that the development of China's secondary TVET has been on a downward trend since 2010, while higher TVET has been on an upward trend since the late 1990s'. China has the largest number of vocational and technical education students in the world, with more than 23 million students and approximately 11.7 thousand vocational and technical schools and colleges as of 2018. The quality of training programs is guaranteed through quality assurance mechanisms that are put in place. To enhance equity in uptake, vocational education funding is guaranteed for all, including students coming from low-income families. Similarly, institutions are increasingly using technology in the delivery of training to produce an ICT-competent workforce.



## Alignment of TVET programs with regional economic needs

The technical and vocational institutions in China are closely aligned with industry needs by offering an industry-focused curriculum. The institutions provide skills that meet local market demands. This is ensured through the provision of practical skills relevant to vital sectors within a given region. The linkage between training and industry needs helps to foster collaborative partnerships to promote skills development and economic growth. However, in



in most parts of Eastern Africa region, there is a mismatch between socio-economic demands and the skills supplied by the local TVET institutions. This misalignment of skills and industry needs contributes to offering programs that do not add value to the immediate society including improving employment prospects for individuals. It undermines the utility and attractiveness of the institutions in addressing specific region's skills gaps. Additionally, it also inhibits public and political buy-in due to lack of ownership of the institution's products and services by the local community. The situation breeds distrust towards the outcomes of the TVET training in meet societal demands and this demoralizes the need to enroll in such courses.



## Deepening industry-TVET education integration

Kenya's TVET governance framework is characterized by a fragmented approach to bridging the gaps between vocational education and industry needs. There is an absence of deep cooperation among industrial enterprises and TVET institutions. This is due to lack of collaboration in cultivating a workforce that is equipped with relevant skills to meet the challenges of the modern labor market. As such most of the enterprises remain reluctant to enter into cooperation with the learning institutions, impeding TVET's dual track system that enables combining time spent in the classroom with work at a company.

Similarly, industrial enterprises lack enthusiasm, thereby compounding the ability of TVET institutions to effectively address modern development challenges. The linkage gaps offer prospects for the government to facilitate cooperation between the two entities, particularly linking TVETs with small and medium industrial enterprises as opposed to large corporate entities. TVET reform in Gansu Province in China using the German model led to the building of a modern TVET system that had deep cooperation between small and medium industrial enterprises. The strengthened collaboration facilitated 700,000 individuals to receive employment, entrepreneurship, and labor service training every year.

Embracing a dual-track system that supports extensive dialogue and cooperation between industrial and vocational education enterprises has made countries such as China and Germany world leaders in TVET. Other countries such as Switzerland, Slovakia, and Austria have adopted the cooperation model. A deeper cooperation can encourage enterprises to provide TVETs with training funds, venues, facilities, trained instructors, enter into training contracts with students, and pay students training allowance. In Kenya, the government is gradually piloting a project that is helping seven national training institutions to upgrade to centres of excellence



and to pilot a dual vocational training model. The Ministry of Education, State Department of TVET, in collaboration with various private enterprises and international development partners rolled out a Dual TVET Program in May 2024 that aims to annually engage over 1,000 students, aligning them with relevant industries across Kenya. The program targets to equip over 6,000 Kenyan youth with practical industry skills. This will ensure more than 40% participation from women and 1% from persons with disabilities by 2027. However, its long-term goal falls short of adequately creating adequate opportunities for the number of graduates annually.

The partnerships also can invigorate modernizing the institution's infrastructure in line with the modern labor market needs. Constant feedback from industry practitioners can inform on skills that are much needed in the industry and aid in tailoring vocational training to the needs of these strategic sectors including focused funding on the priority areas.

## Conclusion

The structure of TVETs in Kenya and the Eastern Africa region should be geared towards skilled workforce to support the country's unique skills gaps for rapid economic transformation. Therefore, the institution's curriculum should mirror Kenya's national and county socio-economic development blueprint skills needs. The reform's strategic options lie in having an industry-focused curriculum; introducing TVET education at elementary levels; and deepening cooperation between the training institutions and industrial enterprises.

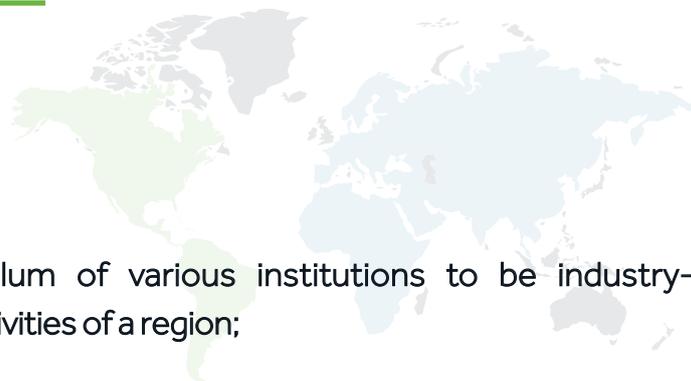


## Recommendations

The Ministry of Education should;

1. fast-track the operationalization of the initiative for people-to-people exchanges proposed during the 9th Ministerial Conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation;
2. fast-track finalization of Kenya's draft TVET policy (March 2014) and review it in line with China's good practices on vocational and technical education including the introduction of TVETs at elementary levels in junior secondary schools;
3. revitalize scaling up the pilots with a dual vocational training model across all TVETs in the country;
4. intensify the institutions-industry cooperation in funding mobilization for tailoring vocational training to the needs of a country's or a region's strategic sectors including opportunities from recent Kenya's membership to China-led Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB);





5. review the curriculum of various institutions to be industry-focused based on the socio-economic activities of a region;
6. synergizing industrial enterprises and TVET institutions' cooperation; and
7. lobby parliament for elaborate legislation related to the dual TVET system including Laws of Vocational Education, Protection Laws of Youth Labor, and Laws of Labor Promotion.





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