

Abebe Yehualawork Malle

Policy-Practice Gap in Participation of  
Students with Disabilities in Ethiopia's  
Formal Vocational Education Programme



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Editors

Markku Leskinen

Department of Education, University of Jyväskylä

Pekka Olsbo, Sini Tuikka

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## **ABSTRACT**

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In Ethiopia, individuals with disabilities have limited access to educational and vocational training opportunities due to environmental, attitudinal and institutional barriers. The overarching purpose of the study was to investigate the status of inclusiveness of relevant policy and legal instruments of the study countries and their practicality in vocational education programmes. The specific aims of the study were to: explore the extent to which the issue of special educational and training needs for persons with disabilities is addressed in the education and training policy of Ethiopia, specifically focusing on technical and vocational education and training (TVET); investigate prevailing challenges and opportunities in relation to the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education programmes in Ethiopia and, finally, to examine the status of inclusiveness of the education and training policy of Ethiopia compared with the situations of Kenya and Tanzania, focusing particularly on vocational education. The study data were gathered from the selected national as well as regional TVET institutions, ministries of education, TVET agencies/authorities and other government organisations and DPOs of the study countries. The data collection tools comprised: focus group discussions; interviews; questionnaires; systematic observations and document analysis. A total of 110 trainers and 28 students with disabilities from the selected colleges completed the questionnaires. Forty representatives and leaders of DPOs and selected indigenous NGOs working on the issue of disability participated in four focus group discussions held in the study countries. In addition, 30 regional and college-level administrators and 29 high-profile experts and government representatives of the study countries were interviewed. A total of 10 colleges selected from five big regions of Ethiopia were evaluated through direct observation in terms of the accessibility of their physical environments. Document analysis was conducted on the contents of the relevant policy, legal and implementation instruments to determine their inclusivity status. The findings revealed that the issue of disability has not been sufficiently addressed in relation to issues of strategy, prioritisation and implementation due to the lack of appropriate facilitation and skilled human power.

Keywords: persons with disabilities, Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania, policy development and analysis, inclusion, technical and vocational education and training (TVET)

**Author's address** Malle, Abebe Yehualawork  
University of Jyvaskyla, Finland  
Department of Education  
P.O. Box 35, FI-40014 University of Jyvaskyla, Finland  
abework2011@yahoo.com

**Supervisors** Adjunct Professor Raija Pirttimaa  
Department of Education  
University of Jyvaskyla, Finland

Professor Timo Saloviita  
Department of Teacher Education  
University of Jyvaskyla, Finland

**Reviewers** Professor Richard Rose  
Department of Special Education Needs & Inclusion  
University of Northampton, United Kingdom

Adjunct professor Antti Teittinen  
The Finnish Association on Intellectual and  
Developmental Disabilities, Finland

**Opponent** Adjunct professor Antti Teittinen  
The Finnish Association on Intellectual and  
Developmental Disabilities, Finland

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## ORIGINAL PAPERS

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- Article II** Malle, Y. A., Pirttimaa, R. & Saloviita, T. (2015a). Inclusion of students with disabilities in formal vocational education programs in Ethiopia. *International Journal of Special Education*, 30(2), 1-10.
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The division of labour between the authors in the two co-authored articles was such that the first author was responsible for the research questions, research design, data collection, preliminary analysis of results and the article's first draft. The two co-authors participated in the thorough rewriting, bringing new references, perspectives, formulations, text excerpts and revisions.

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

Disability is a reality and therefore an issue in any society. According to the definition adopted by the United Nations (2006) in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, persons with disabilities 'include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others' (United Nations, 2006, p. 4). It is estimated that more than a billion people, or about 15% of the world's population, are living with a disability, and 80% of them reside in low-income countries (WHO and World Bank, 2011, p. 29). Of the total population of Ethiopia, 17.6% are estimated to be living with some sort of impairment (WHO and World Bank, 2011, p. 272). The main challenge for people with disabilities is related not necessarily to their specific impairment but rather to their lack of equal access to various rehabilitation services such as health care, education, employment or social and legal support systems (United Nations, 2011).

Education and vocational training are recognised as fundamental elements of human rights, as endorsed by several human rights documents (e.g. United Nations, 1948, 1966, 1983b). The World Declaration of Education for All (EFA) was agreed at the UNESCO meeting in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990 as a starting point for a global commitment to providing basic, quality education for all children, youth and adults (UNESCO, 2014). The achievements of the EFA were evaluated ten years later in Dakar, Senegal, and new goals were set (UNESCO, 2014). The first Dakar goal was 'Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children' (UNESCO, 2014). Aside from such general goals, the educational needs of persons with disabilities have attained specific attention through several international declarations (United Nations, 1983a, 1983b; UNESCO, 1994) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006), as well as through national legislation and other national policy documents.

However, developing countries have thus far done very little to help persons with disabilities to participate in regular education and vocational training.

There has also been a clear lack of progress towards the goals stated in the EFA (Peters, 2007). According to UNESCO's 2010 Education for All Global Monitoring Report, most of the poorest countries were not on the right track in achieving the 2015 Millennium Development Goals, including achieving universal primary education (UNESCO, 2010). In particular, there was a failure to provide for the special educational needs of marginalised groups, especially persons with disabilities. A 2011 UN report noted that 90% of children with disabilities in developing countries still do not have the opportunity to access education (United Nations, 2011).

Despite of these challenges, significant progress has been made in the field of technical and vocational education following the 1990 launch of the Education for All movement by UNESCO and several other international organisations (UNESCO, 2014). The development of vocational skills was taken into account as part of the third goal of the movement (UNESCO, 2014). Despite the attention and priority given to skills development, the success of the EFA programme in this area of education has remained limited. This is confirmed by the 2012 EFA Global Monitoring Report, which states that "an estimated 11% of secondary school pupils were enrolled in such programmes" (UNESCO, 2012, p. 4).

A lack of access to skills training results in employment-related challenges for people with disabilities. Accordingly, a number of strategies have been recommended for overcoming these challenges. For example, Beresford (1996) suggested a number of viable strategies such as providing educational opportunities, offering further training in employability skills, promoting accessible and decent employment, addressing the opportunity costs related to disability and confronting prejudice against people with disabilities. In particular, in countries where people with disabilities lead poverty-stricken lives due to the multifaceted challenges they face, vocational education is an ideal instrument to enhance their economic power and overall wellbeing.

## **1.1 Theoretical perspective of the study**

The study mainly examines the theories that focus on the individual differences caused by natural and environmental factors, inclusion and fundamental human rights issues that play a significant role in shaping countries' educational and training systems.

Slavin (1994) argued that there are individual differences among students and that even identical twins are not exactly the same despite being genetically alike. He further stated that the family environment, the hereditary makeup, the natural setting, the components of the community and the interaction of these elements influence each individual. Hence, it is possible to infer that regardless of the existence of common needs among human beings, individuals with and without disabilities have universal as well as varying needs that should be properly recognised and addressed in the provision of educational and training

services. In light of this, individuals with disabilities have specific educational/training needs, commonly known as special educational needs, due to their respective impairments. Therefore, investigating the learning environment with regard to the diverse needs of students having various backgrounds became one of the thematic areas of study in education (Frederickson & Cline, 2009).

The other aspect of the study's theoretical framework adhered to the conception of the principles and practices of inclusive education/training. In education and other public sectors, a paradigm shift has occurred incrementally over time in regards to individuals with disabilities. Following the industrial revolution of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, systematic organic changes have been observed, and the theory of educating students with disabilities has passed through four phases: 'relative isolation, integration (mainstreaming), inclusion, and empowerment' (Smith, Polloway, et al., 2012, p. 4). Currently, inclusion is being used as an appropriate strategy to address the basic, as well as the special, educational/training needs of students with disabilities. The term inclusive is commonly used in reference to educational and other public services that accommodate all persons, including those with and without disabilities, for the sake of having full and effective participation in educational and other provisions (ILO, UNESCO & WHO, 2004). This document further stated that the principle of inclusion is being employed at the policy level and that all public services, including the regular education and training systems, are required to adapt their structures and procedures to be friendly and accessible for students with special educational and training needs. As a result, inclusion has now become an issue inextricably linked with policy formulation as a guideline for developing accessible learning environments responsive to the special educational/training needs of students with disabilities (Ellis, Tod, & Graham-Matheson, 2008). However, promoting inclusive education has not only created fascinating opportunities but also undeniable challenges (Rose & Shevlin, 2010).

All relevant human rights instruments declare access to education as one of the inviolable human rights that all citizens are entitled to, regardless of their differences in language, social and economic background, religion or ability. The UN Convention (2006) on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities declared that the educational and training needs of students with disabilities should be adequately addressed from a human rights perspective. The convention endorsed inclusion to be an appropriate approach for promoting the special educational needs of students with disabilities. This approach is chosen in line with the general principle that 'inclusion is a right, not a privilege for a select few', as stated by the Board of Education Clementon Schools District (cited in Allen & Cowdery, 2005). The question here is how are the principles of inclusion, in terms of the special needs of persons with disabilities, taken into consideration and implemented properly in regular education and vocational training systems.

## 1.2 Why technical and vocational education?

There is an increasing demand in advanced industrialised countries for a skilled workforce. This underpins the importance of improving and enhancing the quality of vocational education in order to advance the skills and capacities of the workforce (McFarland & Vickers, 1994). In some countries, vocational training is considered to be a good middle-level training option, whereas in other countries people engage in such training as a minority option because of a lack of a better alternative (McFarland & Vickers, 1994). It is clear that in developing countries vocational education and training can be used as workable instruments in programmes aimed at reducing poverty and unemployment among the general public. This is because individuals who can access education and vocational training are more likely to progress in all aspects of life.

Vocational education is considered to be an important investment and instrument due to its high-level contribution to the socioeconomic improvement and overall development of nations. “Sustainable growth, competitiveness, innovation and social inclusion” can be achieved by training citizens to be knowledgeable, skillful and competent in various types of vocations (Zarifis, 2010, p. 201).

In many countries, vocational education and training programmes have been developed to address the training needs of all ages and groups. These include dropout school students who are interested in continuing their study in vocational education beyond high school, seasoned or experienced workers who need further training to upgrade their knowledge and skills, and women who are returning to the workforce. In addition, in the past few decades people who belong to socioeconomically disadvantaged groups in society, including people with disabilities, have been able to avail themselves of the benefits of technical and vocational education and training programmes (Arnold, 1964).

## 1.3 Disability and vocational education: Challenges and opportunities

The First and Second World War, while generating an increase in the number of disabled persons in industrialised nations, brought more visibility and attention to the idea of rehabilitation. Disability-focused policies for the employment and vocational rehabilitation of people with disabilities were developed to meet the needs of people injured in the wars (Helander, 1999). In the 1960s UNESCO began including among its objectives the special education and vocational training needs of people with disabilities. This initiative developed into the principle that “TVET systems must be open and all-inclusive to ensure that even the most unprivileged individuals have access to learning and training” (UNESCO & ILO, 2002, p. 8).

Employing a human rights perspective, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006) recognised the availability and accessibility of education and vocational training for persons with disabilities. Based on the officially endorsed universal assumptions by this and other human rights instruments, UN member states initiated efforts to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in vocational education programmes.

## **1.4 Overview of mission and objectives of vocational education programmes: An African perspective**

In the last two decades, African nations have become increasingly aware of the typical role of TVET in meeting the multifaceted economic needs of their people, including in relation to employability. Hence, 'TVET delivery systems are well placed to train the skilled and entrepreneurial workforce that Africa needs to create wealth and emerge out of poverty' (African Union, 2007, p. 5).

This emerging development in the sector of TVET programmes is compatible with the vision of the African Union (AU), which is 'an integrated, peaceful prosperous Africa driven by its own people to take its rightful place in the global community and the knowledge economy' (African Union, 2007, p. 5). The AU recognised TVET in the second decade of education as a means of economic empowerment and self-reliance among the youth.

The vocational education systems in Africa differ from country to country in terms of their delivery status and the level of the institutions. For instance, in sub-Saharan countries, such as Kenya, the formal TVET programme is school-based, and in some countries, it follows the colonial model, and students would join TVET at the end of primary school (African Union, 2007). In the current context of Africa TVET programmes, agriculture is a leading priority area, followed by '...Public health and water resources, energy and environmental management, information and communication technologies, construction and maintenance and good governance' (African Union, 2014, p. 24).

### **1.4.1 Historical background of vocational education in Ethiopia**

Historical evidence (including archaeological findings and written documents) has confirmed that the origins of advanced technical and vocational skills in Ethiopia can be traced back to the ancient Axumite and medieval Zagwe and Gondarian civilisations. During these dynasties, artisans were able to construct magnificent monuments that have since been designated as international heritage sites by UNESCO. This historical development enabled the country to be known for its magnificent and ancient civilisation. However, these cultural advances were lost during the subsequent centuries. Ground-breaking progress in technical and vocational education began during the Italian occupation (1935–1941), and this paved the way for the foundation of several vocational education schools. These schools were established mainly to serve Italian colonial in-



terests that were geared towards exploiting the natural resources of the country (Takele, 2008).

In the post-liberation period, a professional workforce was urgently needed to meet the demands of the emerging industrial and commercial sectors for skilled labour. Accordingly, a number of new technical and vocational schools and colleges were opened in the capital city and certain selected regions of the country. These vocational schools and colleges played a significant role in producing skilled human power in the three decades following the liberation (Wanna, 1996). However, the institutional capacity of these TVET schools and colleges and the expansion of the programme itself were limited due to a lack of proper attention from the leadership of the sector compared to the emphasis given to general education.

The proclamation of the 1994 Education and Training Policy (FDRE Ministry of Education, 1994) was a turning point in the education system of Ethiopia. It resulted in reforms that placed a focus on technical and vocational education and training programmes within the education sector. As a result, vocational education programmes were reformed based on an outcomes-based approach, and noticeable results were observed in the sector, including a sharp rise in the number of vocational education institutions and high student enrolments.

The 1994 Education and Training Policy was developed to ensure relevance, quality, accessibility and equity in the education and vocational training sector. The policy was further aimed at satisfying “the country's need for skilled manpower by providing training in various skills and at different levels” (FDRE Ministry of Education, 1994, p. 12).

Based on this national policy, the country developed the National Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Strategy in August 2008. The overarching objective of this strategy was to produce skilled human power in the relentless struggle for poverty reduction among the general public (FDRE Ministry of Education, 2008).

#### **1.4.2 Technical and vocational education and training in Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania today**

In accordance with one of the conceptual principles of Ethiopia's TVET system, which was stated in the National Technical and Vocational Education and Training Strategy, vocational training is instantiated through an outcome-based approach as a benchmark for the learning process by means of identifying competence in the labour market (FDRE Ministry of Education, 2008).

The current TVET programme of Ethiopia is intended to produce “a lower-and middle-level, competent, motivated, adaptable and innovative workforce” (FDRE Ministry of Education, August 2015, p. 21). In line with the educational and training system of the country, grade 10 (lower secondary school) completers are eligible to join the formal vocational training programme. As per the coming five-year plan of the Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP V 2015/16–2019/20), 80% of grade 10 completers are expected to transit to the formal TVET programme (FDRE Ministry of Education, August 2015).

However, the ministry's annual statistical data for the last five years indicates that the number of enrollees in the TVET programme is in a state of decline due to the availability of alternative study streams such as teachers' training programmes and military and police academies (FDRE Ministry of Education, 2015).

In the case of Kenya, regardless of a significant number of challenges/constraints in the last two decades, the development and implementation of Kenya's Education Sector Support Programme (2005–2010), the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology Strategic Plan (2008) and the Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (2009) enabled the country to make tremendous progress and achievements in the education and training sector in terms of improving 'access, equity, quality, relevance and sector management' (Godia, 2012, p. 4).

The 2010 Constitution of Kenya, Article 10 (2) (b), (c) and (d) sets out the values that the government should ensure in the education and training sector for the full participation of people: '...equity, social justice, inclusiveness, equality, human rights, non-discrimination and the protection of marginalized groups, good governance, integrity, transparency and accountability and sustainable development' (Republic of Kenya, 2010, p. 22). Kenya also enacted a TVET Act '... which will conceive the Kenya TVET Authority by 2015' (African Union, 2014, p. 24). The overall goal of the vocational education policy of the government of Kenya is intended to '...provide relevant and adequate skills for industrial and economic development...' (Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Education, Higher Education, Science and Technology, 2012, p. 91).

With regard to Tanzania, the concerted socioeconomic development effort of the government, which is guided by the Tanzania Development Vision 2025, recognised quality education and training as key instruments for the achievement of the development vision of the country. In order to achieve the appropriate skills level, human power needs to be made available in the development vision. The vocational education and training sector developed a five-year programme known as Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development Programme (TVETDP, 2013/14–2017/18) with the objective of producing a competitive, capable and productive work force. The programme focuses on four priority areas: 'Access and equity in TVET, Quality of outputs, capacity to provide quality TVET and Monitoring and Evaluation of TVET' (United Republic of Tanzania, Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2013, p. VIII). The document further notes that the first priority area of the programme facilitates access to vocational education for students from disadvantaged groups in society.

Alongside this TVET development programme, the Vocational Education and Training Authority (VETA) of Tanzania, which is authorised by law to regulate, provide, finance, support, and promote vocational education and training (VET), developed a five-year corporate plan (2012/13–2016/17). In accordance with this guiding plan, the authority as the responsible government agency, enlisted a common vision stated in the TVET development programme 'to en-

sure provision of quality VET that leads to generation of competitive labor force and contributes to social economic development...’ (United Republic of Tanzania Vocational Education Training Authority VETA, 2012, p. 48).

## 2 AIMS

The overall purpose of the study was to explore the extent to which the special educational and training needs of persons with disabilities were addressed in the education and training policies of the countries under study as well as various barriers faced by, and opportunities for the participation of, students with disabilities in formal vocational education programmes in Ethiopia compared with the situations of Kenya and Tanzania.

The enthusiastic reason for conducting this research was to verify the background as well as the prevailing challenges hindering the participation of students with disabilities in Ethiopia's TVET programme. The comparison of the status of inclusiveness of the vocational education and training programme of Ethiopia with the selected east African countries was carried out with the objective of identifying the major challenges and opportunities for the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education and to make recommendations on the way forward, on the basis of the research findings, of the best practices of the study countries. A policy content analysis was performed to determine whether an enabling environment and opportunities are available at the policy level for the participation of students with disabilities in the vocational education programme of the country.

The thematic issues of the study were investigated with respect to the relevant theoretical frameworks/concepts addressed in prior studies and international instruments. First, it has been recommended that policies should state their goals, objectives and means of implementation as clearly as possible (Tormjan, 2005). Second, it has been suggested that policies should be developed in consultation with the stakeholders concerned and with meaningful participation and contributions from communities (Northern Territory Government of Canada, 2000; Smith, 2003). On the basis of this recommendation, disabled persons' organisations (DPOs) should be considered as partners in the formulation of disability policies. This principle is confirmed in Articles 21, 29 and 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), which details the rights of disabled people to be involved and to be able to express their opinions for consideration in policy formulation and public affairs. The questions

posed to the study participants were prepared with the objective of exploring the major thematic issues of the study, as described hereunder.

TABLE 1 Research questions of the three sub-studies

Study	Specifications
Sub-study I Policy-practice gap in the participation of students with disabilities in the education and training programme of Ethiopia: Policy content analysis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•How do participants evaluate the inclusion of disability issues in government policies?</li> <li>•What do participants think about the role of disability organisations in the process of policy formulation?</li> <li>•How do participants evaluate the awareness of policy makers regarding the special educational and training needs of students with disabilities?</li> </ul>
Sub-study II Inclusion of students with disabilities in formal vocational education programmes in Ethiopia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•How do participants evaluate the current status/preparedness of the vocational education sector in accommodating individuals with disabilities?</li> <li>•What are the prevailing challenges and opportunities for the participation of students with disabilities in the vocational education programme?</li> <li>•How do the participants evaluate the awareness of the implementers of the vocational education programme regarding the special educational and training needs of students with disabilities?</li> <li>•What do the participants recommend as a way forward in enhancing the effective participation of students with disabilities in the regular vocational education system?</li> </ul>
Sub-study III Inclusiveness in the vocational education policy and legal frameworks of Kenya and Tanzania	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•The same basic questions mentioned above were put to the study participants from Kenya and Tanzania for the purpose of comparison with the findings of sub-studies I and II.</li> </ul>

## **3 METHODS**

### **3.1 Methodological overview**

A qualitative research methodology was employed in this study. The qualitative method was objectively preferred based on an understanding that it promotes an enabling environment for the researcher to update and improve the study process. As Mason (2007, p. 24) states, qualitative research is '...exploratory, fluid, and flexible, data-driven and context-sensitive'.

There was a preference for the qualitative method in the current research because the thematic areas addressed in the sub-studies were all interrelated. The fact that the policy content analysis required an exploratory approach to investigate the status of inclusiveness of relevant policy and legal instruments using document analysis also magnified the pivotal role of the qualitative research method. The principle and practice of inclusion were analysed contextually in line with the policy statements and practices of the study countries in terms of the national endeavours for the inclusion of the issue of disability in vocational education programmes. Relevant data collection techniques such as interviews, questionnaires, focus group discussions, document analyses of the relevant policy and legal frameworks of the study countries and systematic observations were used to gather information, as indicated in the table below.

TABLE 2 Aims, participants, data collection instruments, data set and data analysis

Sub-Studies	Aims	Participants	Data collection	Data set	Data Analysis
I Policy-practice gap in the participation of students with disabilities in the education and training programme of Ethiopia: Policy content analysis	How the needs of persons with disabilities are addressed in the education and training policy, specifically in TVET	22 members of the management staff and governance of 4 DPO networks; 8 local NGOs working on disability issues; 14 high-profile experts from MoE	Focus group discussions and interviews	86 pages	Thematic coding
II Inclusion of students with disabilities in formal vocational education programmes in Ethiopia	Barriers and opportunities for students with disabilities in TVET programmes	110 trainers; 28 students with disabilities; 30 administrators from 5 regional TVET bureaus and 10 TVET colleges	Interviews, questionnaires and observation checklist	80 pages	Thematic coding; percentages and frequencies
III Inclusiveness in the vocational education policy and legal frameworks of Kenya and Tanzania	Inclusiveness of the policy and legal frameworks of Kenya and Tanzania in terms of needs of people with disabilities	18 DPO representatives of Kenya and Tanzania; 15 high profile experts from government	Focus group discussions; interviews; document analysis	75 pages; 20 documents	Thematic coding

### 3.2 Participants

In the course of the data collection, basic questions (see Table 1) were posed during focus group discussions and interviews with people working in DPOs and informants recruited from relevant government institutions in the study countries.

Using purposive and snowball sampling, a total of 59 high-profile policy makers and experts as well as administrators assigned to federal/national government ministries of education and TVET authorities, regional bureaus and TVET colleges of the study countries were selected for interview. In comparison to random sampling, the most agreed upon tools that could serve in the selection of interviewees for the typical study issues addressed here are purposive and snowball sampling (Seidman, 2006). The research aim and the research questions guide the researcher to devise the research design, establish a data collection strategy and select a study population (Oliver, 2003). The main the-

matic issues raised and discussed in the study demanded the contribution of certain groups of policy experts and implementers from the studied countries. In the context of most African countries, including Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania, only a limited number of individuals within the study population are involved in special education. In addition, the fact that the first and co-researchers do not belong to the education/vocational training system of Kenya and Tanzania necessitated the use of purposive and snowball sampling to reach the targeted study population. Patton (2015, p. 280) states that 'it is an approach for locating information-rich key informants or critical cases'.

The interview participants possessed high-level qualifications in various disciplines, with pertinent experience and particular relevant responsibilities in generating policies and strategies and implementing programmes within the education and vocational training sector of the study countries. In addition, 110 trainers and 28 trainees with disabilities from 10 TVET colleges in Ethiopia completed the questionnaires. In each of the TVET colleges targeted, there were more than 100 trainers. About 10 trainers from each college were randomly selected from a list of trainers of each field of study (e.g. automotive and other manufacturing industries, tourism and hotel management, garment and textiles) in collaboration with the management of the targeted TVET colleges. A total of 40 high-level DPO and NGO leaders working on various disability issues were selected as discussants for the focus groups in the study counties. They were chosen for their seniority and current roles in leading the disability awareness movements in Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania. These discussants were qualified and experienced in different professions and possessed adaptive skills, such as in special needs education, social work, human rights, history, sign language and deaf culture, gender studies, accounting and public administration, etc. Some of them were renowned disability awareness activists.

In accordance with the federal administrative structure of Ethiopia, there are nine regional states and two city governments. Of these, the city of Addis Ababa and the regions of Oromiya, Amhara, SNNP and Tigray were selected for the purpose of this study because they represent 89.59 % of the total population of the country and have a significant number of TVET colleges and people with disabilities. Hence, the study participants were recruited from these regions of Ethiopia as well as from Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, the capital cities of Kenya and Tanzania, respectively.

In addition to the relevant national ministries, vocational education and training authorities, and other government bodies and regional TVET bureaus, technical and vocational education and training colleges were selected for the purposes of this study. The selection was based on three grounds: First, colleges enrol a significant number of students and offer more fields of study compared to other similar institutions; second, colleges provide relatively better training opportunities for people with disabilities; and third, colleges are recognised as leading institutions by their respective regional TVET bureaus due to their experience and academic seniority.



### 3.3 Data collection

The first researcher was acquainted with the study's key issues and engaged in seminars, training workshops and consultation services regarding disability and vocational education in Ethiopia. The researcher enjoyed this opportunity to identify the research questions that needed to be addressed in a scientific study and to determine whom should be studied, what source documents should be targeted and what kind of instruments should be employed. During this process, the researcher developed instruments and tested research questions without conducting any piloting. Furthermore, the co-researchers' comments and views enriched the data collection instruments' content.

To contact the study participants and gather data from them, the first author travelled to the five selected regions in Ethiopia. Among these regions, Tigray and Amhara are located approximately 800 kilometres from the capital, Addis Ababa. The author made two journeys to Kenya and Tanzania for the same purpose. However, the data collection process in these countries was designed to be held at national-level government institutions and DPOs situated in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, respectively. As indicated in Table 2, the data collection strategy applied in the sub-studies consisted of various data collection tools, including interviews, focus group discussions, semi-structured questionnaires, systematic observations and document analysis.

For the face-to-face interviews, a friendly approach was applied in order to probe the interviewees' external realities (i.e. facts and events) and internal experiences such as feelings and meanings (Silverman, 2005). Amharic and English languages were used as means of communication for the interviews held in Ethiopia and in Kenya and Tanzania, respectively. An interview guide was prepared to maintain quality and consistency across interviews, and all interviews were recorded using a digital recorder.

The second data collection tool was the focus group discussion with informants from DPOs and NGOs working on various disability issues. Two focus group discussions were held separately in Ethiopia and a remaining two in Kenya and Tanzania, respectively. A question guide was used, and discussions were video and audio recorded. During the course of these focus group discussions, sign language interpreters and assistants were assigned to facilitate the communication and mobility of participants with hearing, visual and physical impairments. Moreover, Kiswahili language translators were employed to communicate with the participants of the focus group discussions conducted in Kenya and Tanzania who could not communicate in English.

Semi-structured questionnaires were prepared for completion by students with disabilities and their trainers. The questionnaires were distributed to both students with disabilities and their trainers. The completed questionnaires were then collected and analysed. The questionnaire for students with disabilities was translated into Amharic to facilitate students with disabilities in under-

standing the concepts underlying the questions and in answering them properly.

The emphasis of the observations held was on the physical environment of the 10 selected TVET colleges from the five regional states in Ethiopia. The first author, who is visually impaired, conducted these observations with the help of his research assistant. The assistant was trained to complete the observations, and having worked in the disability field for 30 years, she was familiar with disability-related issues. The observation checklist was prepared by consulting the accessibility requirements listed in relevant UN documents, including the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (1993) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006).

Finally, for the document analysis, the selection of documents focused on education and training policies, implementation/programmatic instruments and legal frameworks.

### **3.4 Data analysis**

The document analysis, interviews and focus group discussion guidelines, observation checklist and semi-structure questionnaires were all prepared in the context of the thematic issues planned for the research. Conducting qualitative research involves 'arranging for situations to observe, interviewing people, examining records, putting patches of ideas together, writing reports' (Stake, 2010, p. 36). Qualitative research commonly uses thematic analysis, which focuses on thematic issues identified as key categories of discussion. The researchers chose the thematic analysis method to capture the intricacy of the information generated in the data collection process. The research required being familiar with identified data categories, and this was accomplished through the transcription of the collected data. The purpose of producing a transcript is 'to represent on paper as accurately as possible the strings of words uttered...' by the informants through an interview or a focused group discussion (Flick, Kardorff, & Steinke, 2004, p. 248). Therefore, the recorded interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed to facilitate the analysis process.

The inductive approach was used to analyse the interview data, the focus group discussion data and documents, and the thematic issues were linked with the information gathered from the study participants (Patton, 1990; Braun & Clarke 2006). If the research's thematic issues are classified, the inductive approach is useful to analyse the already known facts found in the documents reviewed to determine the data collected from informants. It is believed that 'Qualitative induction is the basis of all scientific procedures that find, in collected data, only new versions of what is already known' (Flick, et al., 2004, p. 161). Based on the common pattern of the data analysis strategy in qualitative research, three steps - organising/preparing the data for analysis, describ-

ing/analysing the data and interpreting the data - were employed (Marczyk, DeMatteo, & Festinger, 2005).

Accordingly, various views gleaned from different groups of respondents through the interviews, questionnaires, focus group discussions and the contents of relevant documents were organised and categorised into the thematic areas of the study. These included: the status of inclusiveness of the relevant policy, legal and implementation instruments of the study countries; the awareness of the study participants of these inclusive documents; the situation regarding the participation of DPOs in the preparation of the policy documents and the challenges and opportunities for the implementation of disability-mainstreamed policy and legal frameworks. Upon organising the data, the second step of the analysis was a description of the findings. This step was used to summarise the opinions obtained from the study participants.

The final but most important stage of the data analysis consisted of interpreting the data to explain the major findings of the study. It is known that the findings' interpretation may go beyond the researcher. As Stake (2010) confirmed, 'Qualitative research draws heavily on interpreting by researchers – and also on interpreting by the people they study and by the readers of the research reports' (p. 37).

In addition, content analysis on the relevant education and training policy, legal and implementation instruments was briefly carried out to supplement the findings gathered from the study participants. The document analysis began with the supreme laws of the countries as well as their national education and vocational training policies and strategies. These documents were investigated and incorporated into the findings in terms of their approach towards addressing the special educational and training needs of students with disabilities. The same approach was applied in Kenya and Tanzania with the objective of analysing the inclusivity of the documents of these countries compared with the same instruments of Ethiopia.

Information about the physical layout of the targeted TVET colleges gleaned through observation was recorded in line with the guiding questions stated on the observation checklist. The focus was on the accessibility of pedestrian walkways, lobbies and corridors, classrooms, toilet buildings and signage.

### **3.5 Ethical Issues**

In scientific research, ethical issues are critically considered due to the fact that most researches require human interaction. In order to protect the wellbeing of their citizens and to respect the study population's voluntary performance, governments have developed regulatory instruments to govern the conduct of scientific researches. For instance, while the study on public documents, which is a part of this research's source document, is not eligible to be governed by ethical review, the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics (2009) in Finland proposes that 'in studies based on observation, interviews or question-

naires, subjects must be told what the study is about and what participating in the study means in concrete terms and how long it will take' (p. 7). It was based on this guiding principle that the research was carried out in line with the rules of the studied countries.

The data collection was carried out as per the relevant legal procedures of Kenya and Tanzania by securing research permission from the Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH) of Tanzania and the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) of Kenya. These official permissions facilitated the researcher to approach the targeted informants through the informed authorization of their respective institutions. Informed permission was also gained from the umbrella organizations for persons with disabilities in the studied countries to conduct focus group discussions and to use the high profiles of member organizations as discussants. The data was gathered with the informants' consent at locations convenient to them, with all data kept confidential. In order to secure the informed consent of the informants, formal contact was established and a brief explanation was given to them about the research's purpose and contribution. In this context, the research has a serious ethical concern that informants 'should be fully informed about what is being done with them' and that their decision should be respected (Oliver, 2003, p. 22). In other words, informed consent infers two interrelated activities: 'participants need first to comprehend and second to agree voluntarily to the nature of their research and their role within it' (Israel & Hay, 2006, p. 61). Accordingly, 15 of the TVET college trainers who were solicited for their participation in the study declined to complete the questionnaire.

As clearly stated in the introduction section of the data collection guideline formats, respondents were informed not to mention their name for the sake of confidentiality. In the course of organising and presenting the collected data, their positions, and sometimes the institutions where they work, were preferably used to explain the relevance of the informants to the issues discussed. All recorded information was kept in an audio recorder prepared only for the purpose of the research, and the information will be deleted immediately after the doctoral dissertation is accepted. This information was given to the respondents as part of the process for gaining their consent for data collection conducted in the form of a focused group discussion and an interview. Based on the principle of research ethics, the respondents should be informed why the audio recording is needed, how the tape will be used, how the tape will be destroyed after the completion of the study and how they will be identified for presentation (Oliver, 2003).

## 4 OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

### 4.1 Sub-study I

The aim of the first sub-study — Policy-practice gap in the participation of students with disabilities in the education and training programme of Ethiopia: Policy content analysis — was two-fold: (1) to explore the extent to which the special educational and training needs of persons with disabilities were addressed in the education and training policy of Ethiopia and (2) to ascertain whether DPOs were included in the process.

The interviews with the high-profile experts and government members provided a general picture of Ethiopia's 1994 Education and Training Policy planning process. The overall preparation of the draft policy was carried out by different task forces established by the Ministry of Education. A number of platforms were organized by the Ministry of Education to facilitate discussion between the task forces and the compiling of their findings into a single draft document. Situational analysis was also carried out via a baseline survey as well as reviews of other countries' experiences.

Six interviewees from the ministry considered that the issue of disability was effectively addressed in the new policy. According to one participant, this was evident because the issue of disability was cited as one of the policy's specific objectives. However, all except two interviewees believed that the content of the 1994 policy organised by the Ministry of Education to facilitate discussion between Education and Training Policy remained limited with regard to the basic and special educational and vocational training needs of persons with disabilities.

The participants in the two focus group discussions (selected from DPOs and NGOs working on disability issues) expressed their unanimous opinion that the issue of disability was mentioned in the policy only as a 'passing remark', with one using the traditional and generally derogatory terminology of 'handicap'. They felt that the issue of disability was handled vaguely in the policy in a way that was open to negative interpretation. The participants pre-

sented several possible reasons why disability issues were not appropriately addressed (according to them) in the policy: first, attitudinal and cognitive factors (including the influence of the traditional socio-medical model on the understanding of disability and a lack of commitment to, and awareness of, such issues); second, there were organisational explanations (such as the absence of a responsible ministerial department with the capacity to influence policy experts to consider the issue of disability in policy statements). It was also cited that individuals with disabilities lacked opportunities to become involved in the preparation of the draft policy and that DPOs were not invited to take part in consultative workshops and meetings.

## 4.2 Sub-study II

The aim of the second sub-study — Inclusion of students with disabilities in formal vocational education programmes in Ethiopia — was to investigate various barriers faced by, and opportunities for, students with disabilities who participated in formal vocational education programmes in Ethiopia.

A total of 27 administrators out of 30 reported that students with disabilities were unsuitable for acceptance in some fields of study, especially in fields requiring ‘hard skills’ such as automotive, manufacturing, construction and electricity. One of the administrators explained her experience with challenges relating to the systematic rejection of the choice of field of study that applicants with disabilities may encounter during registration. These administrators believed that students with mild physical impairments were more likely to be accepted in these fields of study over students with other types of impairments. The administrators preferred that students with disabilities enrol in ‘soft courses’ such as accounting, business, ICT, etc.

The students unanimously agreed that they had limited access and opportunities to enrol in their desired field of study due to attitudinal and institutional barriers, including lack of adaptive technologies and appropriate facilities. The majority of the students (19 of 28) stated that they were not supported by vocational counsellors in identifying the fields of study best suited to their impairment. 21 out of 30 administrators believed that harmful cultural beliefs prevailing in society, which disregard the potential and capacity of persons with disabilities, also contributed to the lower participation of students with disabilities in vocational training programmes. They further argued that persons with disabilities themselves lacked the self-confidence and motivation required to join the training programmes, assuming that they might not secure a job on completion of their training. 60% percent of the trainers believed that there was no demand in the labour market for trained students with disabilities owing to society’s entrenched negative attitudes towards disability.

A total of 64% of the students and 100% of the administrators stated that the physical environment, mainly buildings and sidewalks on the campuses,

were not accessible to students with disabilities, especially to those with visual or physical impairments. Observations inside the physical structures of the colleges focused on lobbies, classrooms, corridors, toilets, office premises and walkways. The findings confirmed that with the exception of a few buildings, these facilities were not accessible to students with disabilities.

A total of 68% of students and 87.2% of trainers considered that adaptive training and educational material were not available to them. All participants (trainers, students and administrative staff) noted that basic services which were particularly significant for addressing the special training needs of students with disabilities were not made available at all levels of the vocational education sector. A total of 81.8% of trainers and 100% of students confirmed that tutorial support was not available in regular vocational training programmes. A total of 61% of the trainers reported that they did not include methods and procedures in their lesson plans to meet the special educational needs of disabled students.

In spite of these barriers, the study participants identified existing opportunities for the enrolment of students with disabilities in vocational education programmes. A total of 75% of the participating students with disabilities mentioned the availability of soft skills programmes suitable to the special needs of students with disabilities and the fact that the enrolment of students with disabilities was being treated under affirmative rules and actions. A total of 28 administrators further argued that the strategy of vocational training programmes in the country is 'competence-based', flexible and accessible.

### 4.3 Sub-study III

The aim of the third sub-study — The status of inclusiveness of the vocational education policy and legal frameworks of Kenya and Tanzania — was to assess the status of inclusiveness of the vocational education and training policy and legal frameworks of Kenya and Tanzania in terms of the special training needs and concerns of people with disabilities.

The document analysis showed that the Constitution of Kenya, Article 54, outlaws discrimination on grounds of disability and provides specific articles in the Bill of Rights for Persons with Disabilities in terms of the provision of facilities, adaptive equipment and tools to address the educational and other special needs of persons with disabilities (Republic of Kenya, 2010).

The 2003 Persons with Disability Act of Kenya was the cornerstone for the realisation of the basic rights of persons with disabilities in the country. Article 18(1) of the act enshrined that 'no person or learning institution shall deny admission to a person with a disability to any course of study by reason only of such disability' (Republic of Kenya, 2003, p. 13). The Ministry of Education has implemented the National Special Needs Education Policy Framework (2009), which targets learners with physical, visual, hearing, speech and other impair-

ments. This policy framework states that the Ministry of Education 'shall recognize and reinforce inclusive education as one of the means for children with special needs to access education' (Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Education, Higher Education, Science and Technology, 2012). The 2013 Basic Education Act of Kenya mainstreamed articles that addresses the special educational needs of students with disabilities, including the availability of accessible infrastructure and relevant facilities (Republic of Kenya, 2013). Moreover, the promotion of the participation of students with disabilities in general and vocational education programmes was included in the Vision 2030 document, to which Kenya is committed (Republic of Kenya, 2007).

In the case of Tanzania, the National Policy on Disability was the earliest policy document that initiated disability-specific policy statements. This policy document declared that 'The government in collaboration with stakeholders shall provide a conducive environment for inclusive education that takes care of special needs of disabled children' (United Republic of Tanzania Ministry of Labour, Youth Development and Sports, 2004, p. 16).

The principles and practices of inclusive education are also addressed in the National Strategy on Inclusive Education 2009–2017. The overall goal of this strategic document is that 'all children, youth and adults in Tanzania have equitable access to quality education in inclusive settings' (United Republic of Tanzania Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2013, p. 17). In accordance with Article 27(1) of the Disability Act of 2010, the government is committed to ensuring the educational and training needs of persons with disabilities, throughout the regular education and vocational training system, on an equal basis with others (United Republic of Tanzania National Assembly, 2010). Based on the core strategic context of the Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development Programme (2013/14–2017/18), access and equity, which have particular relevance for people with disabilities, are recognised as one of priority areas of the country's TVET programme (United Republic of Tanzania Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2013).

The interviewees and the participants of the focus group discussions in Kenya and Tanzania unanimously substantiated that they were aware of the inclusion of the special educational and training needs of students with disabilities in policy, legal and implementation instruments. The majority of the participants, however, pinpointed that the specific needs of some types of impairments which require special attention were not properly addressed in the documents. The participants generally wanted more specific treatment of the needs of various disability groups in the documents as well as more detailed chapters on inclusive education and training. As one of the interviewees put it, 'there is room to be adequate'.

The other interviewee from Tanzania argued differently that, in Tanzania, education and training was addressed as one of the basic human rights as per the 1995 education and training policy of the country. As a result, the first Education Act of Tanzania in 2008 declared that every citizen had the right to access education. However, these policy documents did not consider the special needs



of learners with disabilities. He further added that the 2004 National Disability Policy of Tanzania included some phrases and statements calling upon the education system to respect the special needs of learners with disabilities at all levels, placing emphasis on the availability of adaptive learning materials, assistive devices and professionals trained in special needs education. One interviewee from Tanzania also stated that the endorsement of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities paved the way for the development of the National Inclusive Education Strategy. However, he argued that the implementation of these policy documents was limited due to budget constraints and lack of teachers trained in special needs education.

The study participants from Kenya unanimously acknowledged that DPOs were facilitated in participating in the preparation of the education and training policy. However, among eight interviewees, two high-profile government informants presented some critique. They said that the role and participation of DPOs were too limited to be able to enrich the policy documents in an appropriate manner. One interviewee argued that both DPOs and individual experts with disabilities were involved in the preparation of the Constitution of Kenya of 2010. Persons with disabilities were consulted on contentious issues such as sign language.

All participants from Tanzania confirmed that there has been a significant amount of involvement of DPOs since 2004 when the National Policy on Disability was developed. It was from that policy onwards that the issue of inclusive education was raised. The DPOs were also invited to put forward their opinion when the National Strategy on Inclusive Education was being developed in 2009. However, the participants of the focus group discussion stated that the level of DPO participation was not as significant as anticipated.

Most of the participants argued that policy makers cannot be fully aware of the entire gamut of particular fields and issues in society, such as disability. In democratic societies, policy makers should therefore facilitate the involvement and contribution of all citizens. Two interviewees working in ministries of education as experts, one from Tanzania and the other from Kenya, believed that DPOs were in a good position to advocate for the issue of disability and influence policy makers because the constitution of these countries already included the issue of disability.

The participants agreed that the participation of students with disabilities in formal vocational education was insignificant. Most of the respondents cited basic reasons that adversely impacted the participation of students with disabilities in formal vocational education. These include lack of adaptive educational/training materials/technologies, inaccessible physical and service environment within the structure of vocational education programmes and attitudinal and communication barriers.

Regardless of these multifaceted challenges, most of the study participants acknowledged the formulation of disability-mainstreamed and disability-specific policy, legal and implementation instruments, the commencement and emergence of systemic change moving towards inclusive education and train-

ing and the availability of political goodwill on the part of the governments of the study countries as opportunities for the enhancement of the participation of students with disabilities in regular vocational education programmes.

Considering these challenges and opportunities, a majority of the study participants suggested recommendations on the way forward such as curriculum modification and adaptation, policy review, allocation of adequate funding and the inclusion of special education as a common course in teachers' training programmes with a view to enhancing the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education.

#### **4.4 Summary of the findings**

Regardless of the manifold challenges and limitations revealed, the finding showed that the special educational and training needs of persons with disabilities were mainstreamed in the relevant policy and legal instruments of the study countries. However, the educational and training needs of students with disabilities were fragmentally addressed in the different policy and legal documents of Ethiopia rather than having a comprehensive and single policy document such as the persons with disabilities acts of Kenya and Tanzania.

In Kenya and Tanzania, the process of the development of inclusive policy and legal instruments was carried out with the participation of DPOs and individual experts/professionals with disabilities. Most of the study participants confirmed that they had an awareness/knowledge of the inclusive policy statements of their respective countries.

The participants of the study substantiated that the participation of students with disabilities in formal vocation education programmes was insignificant due to environmental, attitudinal and institutional barriers. Despite these challenges, some progress has been made on the part of the government of the study countries to enhance the participation of persons with disabilities in vocational education programmes.

## 5 GENERAL DISCUSSION

The study aimed to verify the status of the inclusion of students with disabilities in formal vocational educational programmes in Ethiopia compared with the situations in Kenya and Tanzania.

### 5.1 Overview of the study findings and their implications

Regarding the inclusion of the issues of disability in the education and vocational training policy documents, the opinions of the groups of study participants differed in many respects; for example, the representatives of the disability organisations were more critical towards the disability policies than the high-profile government representatives and professionals in the field. As stated in sub-study I on the investigation of the thematic areas of the study in the Ethiopian context, it was agreed that the role of disability organisations was marginal in terms of the formulation of the 1994 Education and Training Policy, a document used as a precedent for the preparation and development of legislative and implementation instruments. The representatives of these disability organisations and the majority of the high-profile interviewees concurred that the issue of disability was not adequately addressed in the 1994 Education and Training Policy. According to those participants representing various civic disability organisations, there was a lack of awareness about the issue of disability among the policy experts and policy makers involved in the process of preparing and developing the policy. In this respect, the fact that DPOs were not invited to take part in the preparation process was an evident drawback.

As the results of the study showed, a genuine disability-inclusive policy that recognises the special educational needs of persons with disabilities is required by the Ethiopian education sector. The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994) highlights that states should 'adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there are compelling reasons for

doing otherwise' (p. 9). The declaration further explains that an inclusive approach in the education and vocational training sector is 'the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all' (p. 9).

As confirmed by participants in sub-study I, the 1994 Education and Training Policy needs to be revised in order to guarantee unambiguous policy formulations that promote the educational and training needs and rights of persons with disabilities. In this respect, the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994) calls upon states to 'give the highest policy and budgetary priority to improving their education systems to enable them to include all children regardless of individual differences or difficulties' (p. 9).

The study participants from Kenya and Tanzania concurred that the governments of these countries worked towards mainstreaming the issue of disability in their respective education and training policy, legal and implementation frameworks. However, some interviewees and a great majority of the focus group discussants from these countries argued that the rehabilitation and specific needs of students with disabilities were not properly addressed. They further explained that those disability-specific and disability-mainstreamed policies and legislations were not yet translated into practice in terms of their core objectives. Tanzania has an ingrained national aspiration concerning the issue of disability in various policy and legal documents. Nonetheless, the realisation of the policies therein has been facing challenges due to '... lack of explicit concrete steps or solutions to advancing the policy statement, and the absence of judicially enforceable remedies for violation of NPD' (Aldersey & Turnbull, 2011, p. 9).

Regardless of the fact that not all the initiatives put forward by DPOs were incorporated, most of the study participants from Kenya and Tanzania confirmed that DPOs were encouraged and invited to participate in the process of preparing relevant education and training policy and legal frameworks.

Presently, UN member countries are encouraged and required to enhance the role and participation of people with disabilities through DPOs and families and to use their initiatives as valuable inputs for the development of disability-mainstreamed policy and legal instruments and standards (ILO, UNESCO, & WHO, 2004).

It was found that the physical environments of TVET colleges in Ethiopia, such as buildings, walkways and other essential structures, could not be accessed by persons with disabilities, particularly persons with visual and physical impairments. Various physical obstacles hindered the mobility of persons with disabilities in these institutions. This contradicted the provision in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Article 9 of the convention stipulates that 'State Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications' (United Nations, 2006). In addition, as stated in the Ethiopian Building Procla-

mation 624/2009 Article 36 (1), 'Any public building shall have a means of access suitable for use by physically impaired persons including those who are obliged to use wheelchairs and those who are able to walk and unable to negotiate steps' (FDRE, 2009).

Moreover, the study identified further contributory factors limiting the participation of students with disabilities in vocational training, among which were an acute shortage of adaptive training materials and equipment such as machines that can be accessed by physically and hearing impaired students; inadequate pedagogical preparation on the part of trainers in terms of the special training needs of students with disabilities and a lack of special support for students with disabilities, such as the provision of tutorial classes. The need for such provisions was confirmed in rule 6 of the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. It states that 'Education in mainstream schools presupposes the provision of interpreter and other appropriate support services, and adequate accessibility and support services, designed to meet the needs of persons with different disabilities, should be provided' (United Nations, 1993, p. 15).

As confirmed in the findings of the study, the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education was limited due to various factors. Nonetheless, the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 2 and 23) stipulates that member states should allocate necessary resources and other support so that children with disabilities can access education. Moreover, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Article 24(5) (p. 18) stipulates that 'State Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others'.

The data gathered from the respondents of the study and the document analysis conducted on relevant education and training policy, legal and implementation documents revealed limited participation of persons with disabilities in vocational education, thus affecting the economy of the study countries in general and the lives of people with disabilities in particular. In accordance with an assessment conducted by the ILO on the economic consequence of excluding persons with disabilities, the GDPs of Ethiopia and Tanzania lose 5.1 and 3.76%, respectively, in each fiscal year (ILO, 2009).

The significance of the study findings can be appraised in light of the following points of view:

1. As stated in the study's document analysis section, Kenya recognized the issue of disability in its supreme law (constitution) from the human rights perspective, which is compatible with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Whereas, the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia's constitution of 1995, which is still enforced, addresses the issue of disability in line with the charity model and in defiance with the UN CRPD endorsed by House of People's Representatives (HPR) of Ethiopia on 1 June 2010, which became the law of the land as Per Article 9(4) of the constitution. Article 41(5) of the incumbent Ethio-

pian constitution states that 'the State shall, within available means, allocate resources to provide rehabilitation and assistance to the physically and mentally disabled, the aged, and to children who are left without parents or guardian' (p. 14). Hence, the study findings revealed the importance of the government revising the constitution to be harmonious with international human rights instruments and removing those ideas that negatively influenced the country's implementation and programmatic documents.

2. The study's findings are believed to be a concrete evidence for DPOs in Ethiopia to raise informed questions and to forge a common voice to apply pressure on the government to address the challenges disclosed by the study, such as the promulgation of the National Disability Act and the establishment of the National Disability Counsel.
3. The studied countries governments must commit their policy makers to include the people's voice in the preparation of national policies and legal frameworks. In turn, the DPOs of the studied countries may assess their capacity/expertise to influence the government in the development of policies and legal instruments.
4. The researchers have recently made efforts to conduct studies on the challenges students with disabilities face when participating in the regular education system. However, the study's findings magnified the importance of conducting further assessments at the policy and legal levels regarding the opportunities governments provided persons with disabilities. In addition, the study's findings may serve as a spring board for other interested researchers to replicate the thematic issues or concerns discussed in this study to other African countries.

## 5.2 Limitations and strengths of the study

### 5.2.1 Limitations

The number of interviewees from Kenya and Tanzania was limited compared with the informants involved in sub-studies I and II, which dealt with the thematic issues of the study in terms of the situation in Ethiopia. The fact that most of the interviewees of the study countries were selected from high-profile management staff of the ministries of education, TVET authorities at national and regional levels and national councils for persons with disabilities etc., the interviewees might have been cautious about giving information and opinions regarding the critical questions posed by the author on the policy contents of the study countries.

In the third sub-study, relevant government TVET institutions at the regional/county level in Kenya and Tanzania were not targeted. Moreover, vocational education trainers and students with disabilities who were attending their training in the TVET colleges of these countries were not adequately involved in the process of data collection. As a result, the practical issues regarding the participation of students with disabilities at the TVET college level were not fully explored. It is assumed that the limited English language proficiency of some informants might have hindered them from more effectively expressing their opinions.

### 5.2.2 Strengths

Regardless of the limitations mentioned above, there are solid aspects of the thesis that contributed to the reliability of the quality and value of the study. The relevance and experience of the informants and their proximity to the central theme of the study was one of the strengths of the research. As depicted in Table 2, most of the respondents held high-level professional qualifications and work experience. Prior research has confirmed that social abstractions such as education and training are well understood through the lived experience of other people obtained from interviews of selected informants (e.g. Seidman, 2006).

The involvement of DPO leaders, professionals and parliamentarians with disabilities in the process of data collection enriched the information used for the study and balanced the limitation caused by the abstention of high-profile informants on critical policy content analysis (Northern Territory Government of Canada ,2000; Smith, 2003). In addition, the participation of students with disabilities in the process of data collection conducted for the second sub-study enabled the author to show the level of practicality of the educational and training policy, legal and implementation frameworks of the study countries, specifically focusing on Ethiopia in terms of the special educational and training needs of person with disabilities.

Some efforts were made to conduct assessments of the overall situation regarding the participation of students with disabilities in the regular general education system in Ethiopia, including examining a handful of studies on non-formal vocational training and disability in Ethiopia (e.g. Feruz, 2006; Membere, 2007; Haile, 2011; Abeba, 2015). This study, however, was the first of its kind to deal with the policy-practice gap in the participation of students with disabilities in formal vocational education programmes of Ethiopia.

### 5.3 Future directions

This study plays a facilitative role in the improvement of physical and service environments of the education and vocational training institutions and programmes in Ethiopia by promoting principles and practices of inclusion. The study contributes alongside other relevant disability-inclusive and disability-specific national and continental documents to produce and consolidate new initiatives in development agendas with a special focus on inclusive education and vocational training.

The Continental Plan of Action for the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities of 2010–2019 states that environment plays a significant role in facilitating or restricting the participation of persons with disabilities at family, community and national levels. The widespread environmental barriers reported in this document include: inadequate policies and standards, negative attitudes, lack of provisions of services, problems of service delivery, inadequate funding, lack of accessibility, lack of consultation and involvement and lack of data and evidence (African Union Commission, Department of Social Affairs, 2010). This document further states that AU member countries are required to promote vocational education opportunities for persons with disabilities with particular emphasis on marketable skills through ratifying and implementing the ILO Convention No. 159 Concerning Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Persons with disabilities) to ensure entry into the labour market of persons with disabilities. In Ethiopia, the emerging concern and involvement of both indigenous and international non-governmental organisations in the promotion of job opportunities for persons with disabilities by supporting such persons to take part in trainings on marketable vocations would contribute to the improvement of the engagements of alumni with disabilities in various occupations.

As this is a comparative study, the findings of the research can enable the study countries to identify the gaps and to share their experiences of implementing inclusion as a strategy to address the special educational and training needs of students with disabilities in regular school and training systems. In respect to Ethiopia, regardless of the prevailing challenges that curtail the inclusion of students with disabilities in vocational education programmes in the country, the findings also reveal promising progress in terms of the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education programmes, which



could serve as a good practice and experience for future direction. The development of guidelines for the inclusion of people with disabilities in TVET, (FDRE Ministry of Education Federal TVET Agency, 2015) is a concrete example of the emerging system change underway in the vocational education programme of the country. The guideline recognised inclusive training as a strategy to address the special needs of trainees' with disabilities. In addition, various departments at Federal, Regional, Zonal, Woreda and TVET college levels have been given specific duties and responsibilities in implementing inclusive training within the structure of the vocational education system.

Hence, in the context of Ethiopia, based on the gaps in policy uncovered in this study, the following major areas of focus can be recommended for improving the participation of students with disabilities in the country's regular education and training system, especially in the field of technical and vocational training and education:

1. Revise and rescind the discriminatory provisions cited in the policy and related implementation documents in line with the declaration and principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
2. Exert pressure on the TVET agency and regional line agencies to mainstream the special training needs of persons with disabilities in their directives, recruitment criteria and other related instruments or to develop a disability-specific strategic document that provides reasonable and clear direction on which specific fields of study should be made accessible to those with particular impairments.
3. Establish a strong and practical horizontal relationship between the TVET agency and the Special Support and Inclusive Education Directorate within the general education stream, at all levels of the system in the ministry, with a view to exchanging information and responsibilities via a partnership that promotes the vocational empowerment of disabled people.
4. Enhance the awareness of policy experts and other relevant professionals, including high-profile positions in the ministry, in general, and in the TVET agency, in particular, by implementing consecutive lobbying dialogues and other mechanisms.
5. Promote the contact of DPOs with the ministry and the TVET agency by strengthening their involvement in the overall activities of the sector.
6. Prepare and submit alternative policy ideas that could serve as source documents for the development of instruments that ensure the participation of persons with disabilities in the country's TVET programme on an equal basis with others.

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## **APPENDIXES**

### **Data collection methods**

Article I, pages 44 - 47

Article II, pages 47 - 58

Article III, pages 58 - 62

## ARTICLE I INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

### Introduction

This Interview Question Guide is prepared to maintain the consistency and quality of one to one interview planned to be conducted in 2012 and 2013 with an objective to gathering reliable information from participants of the study. The interview questions will be administered to high profile and professional personnel of the federal ministry of education and TVET agency who are believed to have contribution and responsibility in the process of policy development and initiatives in education sector development program of Ethiopia. In course of the interview, the confidentiality and voluntary service of the participants are respected.

### Section 1

#### Personal Information

1. Sex: Male  Female
2. Age: 18-30  30-45  above 46
3. Professional status (qualification):  
 Diploma  Degree   
 MA  PhD
4. Position: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Work Place/ Institution:  
 Ministry of education   
 TVET agency
6. Department /section: \_\_\_\_\_

### Section 2

#### Questions

1. Are you aware of the inclusion of the issue of disability in the 1994 Education and Training Policy, Education sector development program documents and other relevant legislations and strategies? If not why?
2. Do you believe that the issue of disability is adequately addressed in the policy from the perspective of moral, ethical and legal position and responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Education and National Technical and Vocational Education and Training Agency?
3. If your answer is No:
  - a. What is the logical reason behind the existing reality? and,
  - b. What should be done in the near future?
4. Do you believe that the inclusion of the issue of special educational needs of PWDs is home-grown?

5. What major steps were followed and applied for the formulation of the 1994 Education and training policy of the country?
6. Is it possible to infer that the target population of the policy including PWDs took part in the process of the development of the policy? If not why?
7. To which type of policy that the 1994 Education and Training Policy belongs? Why?
  - a. Substantive and administrative policy
  - b. Vertical and horizontal policy
  - c. Reactive and proactive policy
  - d. Current and future policy
  - e. Guiding and or organizational policy
8. Do you believe that there should be disability-specific policy compatible with the national education and training policy of the country? If not why?
9. What were the major sources used for the formulation of the education and training policy and related legal frame works of Ethiopia?
10. Do you believe that the following human right principles have been included in the education and training policy of the country in terms of the promotion of the educational and vocational training needs of PWDs?
  - Universality and inalienability
  - Indivisibility
  - Interdependence and interrelatedness
  - Equality and non-discrimination
  - Participation and inclusion
  - Empowerment
  - Accountability and respect for the rule of law
11. Do you believe that the policy makers who participated in the formulation of the education and training policy of a country were aspired or aware to special needs education and disability issues?
12. Do you believe that vocational education as specific stream of study is appropriately and separately addressed in the 1994 Education and Training Policy of the Country?
13. Do you believe that the issue of disability is sufficiently addressed in TVET program legislation, strategy and other relevant documents of the country?
14. It is understood that polices or laws may contain provisions which work to exclude PWDs. Hence, do you have such experience or information in Ethiopian context regarding the issue of disability in TVET sector?
15. Do you believe that the special educational needs of children/persons with disabilities should be considered as one of areas of special attention and actions priority in education and training policy of the country?
16. If your answer is yes or no for the question No 15 above, please ellaborate your reason briefly.



## ARTICLE I FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) QUESTION GUIDE

### Introduction

This FGD Questions Guide is developed to generate information from Disabled Persons Organizations, (DPOs) with an objective to assessing their views regarding the status of the education and training policy of a country including the issue of disability. The participants of the FGD are organized in two groups, one consisting of members of high profile of the secretariats (management), and the other representatives of the governance (Managing Boards and General Assemblies) of the networks namely Federation of Ethiopian National Associations of Persons with Disabilities (FENAPD), Network of Organizations of/for the Visually Impaired and the Blind (NOVIB), Community Based Rehabilitation Network Ethiopia (CBRN-E) and Ethiopian National Disability Action Network (ENDAN).

Moreover, some indigenous disability-focused non-government organizations who have been providing intervention on vocational training to persons with disabilities may be included in the discussion. The confidentiality and the voluntary participation of the members of the FGD's are respected.

### Section 1

#### Personal Information

1. Sex: Male  Female
2. Age: 18-30  30-45  above 46
3. Professional status (Qualification):  
 Diploma  Degree   
 MA  PhD
4. Position: \_\_\_\_\_
5. Name of the organization/Network: \_\_\_\_\_
6. Department/section: \_\_\_\_\_
7. Type of impairment:  
 Visually Impairment  Physical Impairment   
 Hearing Impairment  Intellectual disability   
 Multiple Impairment  Others

### Section 2

#### Questions

17. Are you aware of the inclusion of the issue of disability in the 1994 Education and Training Policy, Education sector development program documents and other relevant legislations and strategies? If not why?
18. Do you believe that the issue of disability is adequately addressed in the policy from the perspective of moral, ethical and legal position and responsibility of the Federal Ministry of Education and National Technical and Vocational Education and Training Agency?
19. If your answer is No:
  - a) What is the logical reason behind the existing reality? and,
  - b) What should be done in the near future?

20. Do you believe that the inclusion of the issue of special educational needs of PWDs is emanated from national initiative? If not why?
21. Is it possible to infer that the target population of the policy including PWDs took part in the process of the development of the policy? If not why?
22. Do you believe that there should be disability-specific policy compatible with the national education and training policy of the country? If not why?
23. Do you believe that the following human right principles have been included in the education and training policy of the country in terms of the promotion of the educational and vocational training needs of PWDs?
  - Universality and inalienability
  - Indivisibility
  - Interdependence and interrelatedness
  - Equality and non-discrimination
  - Participation and inclusion
  - Empowerment
  - Accountability and respect for the rule of law
24. Do you believe that the policy makers who participated in the formulation of the education and training policy of a country were aspired or aware to special needs education and disability issues?
25. Do you believe that the issue of disability is sufficiently addressed in TVET program legislation, strategy and other relevant documents of the country?
26. Do you have the information about the policy, strategy, legal framework and other programmatic documents that contain provisions which restrict the participation of PWDs in technical and vocational education and training program of the country?
27. Do you believe that the special educational needs of children/persons with disabilities should be considered as one of areas of special attention and actions priority in education and training policy of the country?
28. If your answer is yes or no for the question No 11 above, please elaborate your reason briefly.

## **ARTICLE II INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR HIGH PROFILE OF REGIONAL TVET AGENCIES AND MANAGEMENT STAFF OF SELECTED TVET COLLEGES OF FIVE REGIONS**

### **Introduction**

The main objective of this interview guide is to gather the opinions of the key informants to assess the practicality of the participation of students with disabilities in formal vocational education program. The questions are prepared focusing on the challenges and opportunities for the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education program.

As per the designed plan of the study, the key informants will be selected from five regional TVET agencies, Addis Ababa City Government, Oromiya, Amahara, Tigray and SNNP and ten TVET colleges found in these regions.

#### Profile of the Informants

- Sex:** Male  Female
- Age:** 18-30  31-40   
41-50  above 51
- Qualification:** Certificate  Diploma   
BA/BSC  MA/MSc   
PHD
- Work Experience:** 1 - 5  6 - 10   
11- 15  16-20   
above 21

**Position:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of the college/office:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Region:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City/Town:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### Queries

1. Have you ever faced challenges once you have nominated students with disabilities for TVET program? Please explain what kind of practical solution that you have delivered.
2. Could you please state the major practical activities underway by your office/college to facilitate the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education program?
3. Do you consider the provision of special support to facilitate the participation of students with disabilities by:
  - Allocating earmarked budget;
  - Applying affirmative action;
  - Providing adaptive educational materials and assistive devices;
  - Making the college environment accessible and friendly to students with disabilities;
  - Organizing the workshops to be convenient for students with disabilities;
  - Assigning counselors and teachers trained in special needs education;
  - Conducting needs assessment of students with disabilities.
4. Is there a responsible or contact person for the facilitation and follow up of special educational and training needs of students with disabilities at regional TVET agency and college levels?

- Students with visual impairment
  - Students with hearing impairment
  - Students with physical impairment (lower limbs)
  - Students with physical impairment (upper limbs)
  - Students with intellectual disability
6. Do you include disability issue in your annual action plan?
  7. Do you have a complaint procedure to address the grievance of students with disabilities in a circumstance when their educational and training right is infringed?
  8. Do you have a reliable data that indicates the number of students with disabilities who are attending their study in vocational education program underway under your jurisdiction?
  9. What are the major challenges and opportunities for the participation of students with disabilities in vocational educational program in the context of your region and TVET colleges?
  10. What is your overall impression about the service you provided in reference to special educational and training needs of students with disabilities?
  11. What should be done for the promotion of the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education program?

## ARTICLE II PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT ACCESSIBILITY OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

This observation checklist is designed to assess the accessibility of physical layout of the selected TVET Colleges in terms of the special needs of students with disabilities in line with internationally recognized standards. But the questions are developed on the basis of the local context.

1. **Name of the College:** \_\_\_\_\_
2. **Date of observation:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Questions

#### 1. Entrance accessibility

- A) Is the pathway travel from the main gate of the compound of the college is stable, firm, and slip-resistant?  
Yes                      No
- B) Is there a pathway reserved for students who use wheelchair?  
Yes                      No
- C) How is the situation of drainage ditches?  
Yes                      No
- D) Are ramps available in all areas that such facility is needed including buildings having stairs?  
Yes                      No

E) If yes, are they adequate and slip-resistant? Please explain briefly.

---

F) Do all inaccessible entrances have signs indicating the location of an accessible entrance or options?

Yes            No

G) Are the door handles operable with a closed fist and can be opened without too much force?

Yes            No

## 2. Service-area accessibility

A) Does the entrance of the buildings provide direct access to the main floor, lobby, or elevator?

Yes            No

B) Is there the service of elevator in the buildings?

Yes            No

C) If yes, are they accessible for wheelchair users and the visually impaired? Please explain briefly

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D) Is there adequate space in the classrooms and workshops for wheelchair users?

Yes            No

E) Is the space between the isles and rows of student desks is 1 meter wide?

Yes            No

F) Is the top of student's desks in the classrooms and workshops between 0.7 and 1 meter high?

Yes            No

G) Do stairs of buildings have continuous rails?

Yes            No

H) Is there signage facility in the compound of the colleges accessible to students with disabilities?

Yes            No

## 3. Toilet accessibility

I) Are the toilet rooms separated from the main buildings?

Yes            No

J) If yes, is there accessible path way heading to this rooms?

Yes            No

K) Is there at least one toilet (one for each sex) fully accessible?

Yes            No

L) Are there signs at inaccessible toilets that give directions to accessible ones?

Yes            No

M) Does the entry configuration provide adequate maneuvering space for a person using a wheelchair?

Yes            No

N) Are sinks 1.2 meters high or less and usable with one closed fist?

Yes            No

O) Is the toilet rooms' neatness is friendly to wheelchair users and physically and visually impaired?

Yes            No

## ARTICLE II QUESTIONNAIRES TO BE FILLED OUT BY STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES ENROLLED IN SELECTED TVET COLLEGES OF FIVE REGIONS

### Introduction

The questions stated under part 2 of the questioner are prepared to gather the opinions of students with disabilities about the status of the inclusion and participation of students with disabilities in formal vocational education program. The opinions you provide are extremely important to assess the challenges and opportunities for the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education program and give constructive ideas for the way forward.

**Notice:** It is not necessary to write your name on question paper, rather indicate your response by writing in the boxes and space provided, and I assure you that your information will be kept confidential. Thank you for your co-operation.

### Part I: Profile of Respondents

**Sex:**            Male                            Female

**Age:**            10- 20                            21 - 30                            Over 31

**Type of disability:**    Visual impairment            Hearing impairment

                          Physical impairment    Multiple impairment

                          Intellectual disability

**Level of study:**    Level 1                            Level 2                            Level 3                            Level 4

                          Level 5

**The field of study you are learning:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of the college:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Region:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City/Town:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Part II: Queries

1. Did you face challenge or resistance against your admission to the college attributable to your disability?

Yes            No

2. If yes, please elaborate the challenges you encountered.
3. Which institution was the source of your challenges in your effort to join the college?  
Regional TVET Agency      TVET College
4. Do you receive the support of adaptive educational materials, tactile, audiovisual, and other materials which have particular significance and relevance to your special educational and training needs?  
Yes      No
5. If yes, explain the type of adaptive educational materials and learning aids you received.
6. Do you get counseling service?  
Yes      No
7. Do you believe that the physical layout of the compound of the college including buildings, pathways and toilet is friendly to you  
Yes      No
8. If yes, or no, please describe your justification briefly.
9. Is there the availability of relevant professionals and resource room in your college to provide support services for students with disabilities, teachers and college management members?  
Yes      No
10. If yes, explain the type of professionals and the service made available.
11. Do you believe that the field of study that you are learning suits with your type of disability?  
Yes      No
12. Have you enjoyed the opportunity to choose the field of study what you wanted and advice from vocational counselor that helped you choose the subject?  
Yes      No
13. Do you believe that there are adequate training options in the college for students with disabilities?  
Yes      No

14. Have you received job-hunting skills training along side with your field of study?
- Yes      No
15. If you are a student with hearing impairment have you received the service or support of sign language interpreter?
- Yes      No
16. If yes, do you believe that the skill of interpreters in sign language is adequate to communicate with you?
- Yes      No
17. If you are a student with visual impairment, did you receive the service of assistant including human reader?
- Yes      No
18. If you are a student with physical impairment, did you able to secure assistive devices tailored to the specific type of your impairment?
- Yes      No
19. Do you believe that the workshops of the college are organized with a capacity and consideration to address the special educational and training needs of students with disabilities?
- Yes      No
20. Did you receive special support and encouragement for your motivation from teachers and members of management and supportive staff of the college?
- Yes      No
21. If no, what kind of challenges or mistreatment you encountered?
22. Do you feel that the attitude of your peers without disabilities in the college towards the status of your disability is positive?
- Yes      No
23. If no, what kind of difficulty you faced?
24. Do you believe that you may face discrimination in labor market for employment due to your impairment?
- Yes      No



25. Do you believe that the training you received would change your life?

Yes      No

26. If no, explain your reasons briefly

27. Is the training suitable to your physical and mental capacity?

Yes      No

28. Do you have the opportunity to offer your grievances or request to the college management?

Yes      No

29. Do you feel that you may face challenges during apprenticeship?

Yes      No

30. Do you believe that there is opportunity for the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education program?

Yes      No

31. If yes, please illustrate the opportunities briefly.

---

32. What should be done for the enhancement of the participation of students with disabilities in the vocational education program?

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## ARTICLE II QUESTIONNAIRES TO BE FILLED OUT BY TEACHERS OF SELECTED TVET COLLEGES OF FIVE REGIONS

### Introduction

The main objective of this questioner is to gather teachers' opinions who are currently teaching in TVET colleges of selected regions, Addis Ababa City Government, Oromiya, Amhara, Tigray and SNNP on the practicality of the inclusion and participation of students with disabilities in vocational education program. The opinions you provide are very important to indicate the status of the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education and contribute to the way forward using as a source document for the implementing agencies.

**Notice:** It is not necessary to write your name on question paper, rather indicate your response by writing in the boxes and space provided, and I assure you that your information will be kept confidential. Thank you for your co-operation.

**Part I: Profile of study participants**

**Sex:** Male Female

**Age:** 18-30 31-40  
41-50 above 51

**Qualificatio** Certificate Diploma  
BA/BSC MA/MSC PHD

**Work experience:** 1 - 5 6 - 10  
11- 15 16-20  
Above 21

**The subject/s you are teaching:** \_\_\_\_\_

**The level of grade you are teaching:**

Level 1 Level 2  
Level 3 Level 4  
Level 5

**Name of the college:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Region:** \_\_\_\_\_

**City/Town:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Part II: Queries**

1. Do you believe that the college is providing adequate support including in-service training to teachers to upgrade their capacity and pedagogical skills with an objective to enabling them to help students with disabilities in the course of their teaching?

Yes No

2. If yes, what kind of support are you receiving?

\_\_\_\_\_

3. Do you organize tutorial class for your students with disabilities?

Yes No

4. If no, please explain your reasons briefly.

\_\_\_\_\_

5. Do you include practical statements that would address the special needs of students with disabilities in your daily, weekly and annual lesson plan (work)?

Yes      No

6. If no, elaborate your reason briefly.

---

7. Do you receive relevant support from professionals and paraprofessionals such as itinerant teachers, counselors, special education teachers, sign language interpreters and therapists?

Yes      No

8. Do you provide special support for your students with disabilities in the classroom as well as during evaluation/examination?

Yes      No

9. If yes, please elaborate the services you provided.

---

29. Have you tried or experienced to help students with disabilities in choosing the field of studies which are suitable to their ability and type of disability?

Yes      No

30. Do you believe that there are adequate options of field of studies in the college which are convenient to the situations of students with disabilities?

Yes      No

31. According to your opinion, which type of students with disabilities does fit to which type of field of study? Please indicate your answer in the space provided for each type of impairment.

- Students with visual impairment.

---

- Students with hearing impairment .

---

- Students with physical impairment lower limbs (leg)

---

- Students with physical impairment upper limbs (hand)

---

- Intellectual disability

---

- Multiple impairment

---

32. Do you have training on special needs education?  
Yes          No

33. If yes, at what level?  
Workshop                  Diploma  
Certificate                BA Degree  
MA Degree                PhD degree

34. Have you received teachers' guide on special needs education?  
Yes          No

35. Is there the supply of adaptive learning and teaching materials that facilitates your teaching of students with disabilities?  
Yes          No

36. If yes, what kind of adaptive materials or technologies?  
\_\_\_\_\_

37. Are you aware of international and national policy and legal instruments that promote the inclusion of special educational needs of students with disabilities in education and vocational training programs?  
Yes          No

38. If yes, do you believe that these guiding instruments are being implemented properly in terms of the special educational needs of students with disabilities? Please explain your justification briefly.  
\_\_\_\_\_

39. Do you have the experience of teaching of students with disabilities in your field of study?  
Yes          No

40. Do you believe that students with disabilities could attend their training in regular class setting and cope with their peers without disabilities?  
Yes          No

41. If No or Yes, state your reasons briefly.  
\_\_\_\_\_

42. Did you encounter challenges or difficulties in teaching of students with disabilities?  
Yes          No

43. If yes, please explain the challenges and the practical actions you did take for the solution. \_\_\_\_\_
44. Do you believe that there is a demand in labor market for trained students with disabilities?
- Yes      No
45. If no, please explain your reasons succinctly.
- \_\_\_\_\_
46. What services or situations are available at national and TVET colleges levels which can be considered as opportunities for the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education program \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
47. What do you suggest for better and full participation of students with disabilities in vocational education program?

### ARTICLE III DOCUMENT ANALYSIS GUIDELINE

#### Introduction

Document analysis is one of the invaluable tools in qualitative research method commonly used in the studies of social science issues. Documentary analysis involves reading of a variety of written materials which have relevance to the thematic issue of the research. Official materials are intended to be read in the process of document analysis.

Hence, this document analysis is developed based on the facts mentioned above with a view to conducting analysis on the official documents developed in vocational education sector of the study countries, Ethiopia, Tanzania and Kenya.

#### 1.Objective of the Document Analysis

The overarching objective of the document analysis is to assess the status of the inclusiveness of the education and training policy, and vocational education related legislations, strategies and implementation instruments of Ethiopia as compared to the same and relevant documents of Tanzania and Kenya to be dealt as one of the findings of Article 3 of the dissertation.

#### 2. Sources of Documents

The source of documents for this analysis are intended to be Policy, legal, strategy and other relevant documents of the study countries that dealt with the issue of disability and vocational education program.

#### 3. The Type of Analysis

The Interpretative analysis is planned to be used due to the fact that interpretative analysis looks how messages are encoded, latent or hidden and missed or included.

#### 4. Evaluation and Interpretation

In course of the process of analysis, due attention and precaution will be applied to ensure /verify the authenticity, credibility and relevance of the documents selected and used for the purpose of the study.

### ARTICLE III FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) QUESTION GUIDE

#### Introduction

This FGD question guide is developed to generate information from Disabled Persons Organizations, (DPOs) of East African countries, Kenya, and Tanzania with an objective to assessing their views regarding the status of the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education in terms of policy content and action commitment of TVET colleges. Moreover, some indigenous disability-focused non-governmental organizations that have been providing intervention on vocational training to persons with disabilities may be included in the discussion. The confidentiality and voluntary participation of the members of the FGD's are respected.

#### Section 1

##### Profile of Participants

Country: Kenya  Uganda  Tanzania

Sex: Male  Female

Age: 18-30  30-45  above 46

Professional status (qualification):

Diploma  Degree

MA  PhD

Position: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of the DPO: \_\_\_\_\_

Work Experience:

1-10  11-20  21-30  31 and above

#### Section 2

##### Queries

1. Are you aware of the inclusion of the issue of disability/special needs education in education and training policy and other relevant legislation and strategic documents of your country? If not why?
2. Do you believe that the issue of disability/special needs education is adequately addressed in the documents mentioned above from the perspective of moral, ethical and legal position and responsibility of the concerned body of the government? If not why?
3. Are you informed about the policy, legislation and strategic documents of your country that contain provisions which either prohibit or restrict the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education?
4. Do you believe that the inclusion of the issue of special educational needs of PWDs is home-grown initiative? If yes, please elaborate the process.

5. Do you believe that the policy makers and experts who participated in the formulation of the education and training policy of your country were aspired or aware to special needs education and disability issues?
6. Do you believe that DPOs participated in the process of mainstreaming the issue of disability in the education and training policy and other relevant documents of the country? If not why?
7. Do you believe that comprehensive disability legislation is needed in the context of your country rather than mainstreaming the issue of disability fragmentally?
8. Could you please state the major practical efforts underway by your office to conduct lobbying and policy dialogue with the government to promote the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education program?
9. Do you believe that the physical, social and pedagogical environment of vocational education program is friendly and inviting to students with disabilities? If not why?
10. Do you believe that students with disabilities receive special support such as the provision of adaptive educational/training materials and other relevant facilities, and opportunities to get access to field of studies in accordance with their proclivity and special needs related to their type of impairment?
11. Do you believe that students with disabilities can participate in the formal vocational education program of your country? If not why?
12. What are the major challenges and opportunities for the participation of students with disabilities in vocational educational program in the context of your country?
13. Do you believe that the requirements set for the entrance of students in vocational education program/TVET colleges accommodates the special educational and training needs of students with disabilities?
14. What do you suggest for the enhancement of the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education program in the context of policy and implementation levels?

### ARTICLE III INTERVIEW QUESTION GUIDE

#### Introduction

This interview question guide is prepared to maintain the consistency and quality of one to one interview planned to be conducted in 2014 and 2015 with an objective to gathering reliable information for Article 3 from the participants of the study. The interview questions will be forwarded for representatives/high profiles of TVET colleges' managements and relevant departments of ministries of selected East African countries, Kenya, and Tanzania. In course of the interview, the confidentiality of the interviews is kept and respected.

## Section 1

### Profile of the Participants

**Country:** Kenya  Uganda  Tanzania

**Sex:** Male  Female

**Age:** 18-30  30-45  above 46

### Professional status (qualification):

Diploma  Degree

MA  PhD

**Position:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Work Place/ Institution:

Ministry of Education

TVET College

Other

**Department/section:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Work Experience:

1-10  11-20  21-30  31 and above

## Section 2

### Queries

1. Do you believe that special needs education is mainstreamed in the education and training policy, and other relevant legislative and strategic documents in the country? If not, why?
2. If your answer is yes for question number 1:
  - Please mention the documents; and
  - Explain whether these documents adequately recognized/addressed the special educational and training needs of students with disabilities.
3. Are you informed about the policy, legislation and strategic documents of your country that contain provisions which either prohibit or restrict the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education program?
4. Do you believe that the inclusion of the issue of special educational needs of PWDs is home-grown initiative? If yes, please elaborate the process.
5. Do you believe that DPOs participated in the process of mainstreaming the issue of disability in the education and training policy and other relevant documents of the country? If not why?



6. Do you believe that comprehensive disability legislation is needed in the context of your country rather than mainstreaming the issue of disability fragmentally?
7. Could you please state the major practical activities underway by your office/college to facilitate the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education program?
8. Do you consider the provision of special support to facilitate the participation of students with disabilities by:
  - Allocating earmarked budget;
  - Applying affirmative action;
  - Providing adaptive educational materials and assistive devices;
  - Making the college environment accessible and friendly to students with disabilities;
  - Organizing the workshops to be convenient for student with disabilities;
  - Assigning counselors and teachers trained in special needs education;
  - Conducting needs assessment of students with disabilities.
9. Do you include special needs education in the annual action plan and reporting format of your institution?
10. Do you believe that students with disabilities can participate in the formal vocational education program of your country? If not, why?
11. Do you have a reliable data that indicates the number of students with disabilities who are attending their study in vocational education program under your jurisdiction?
12. What are the major challenges and opportunities for the participation of students with disabilities in vocational educational program in the context of your country?
13. What is your overall impression about the service you provided in reference to special educational and training needs of students with disabilities?
14. Do you believe that the requirements set for the entrance of students in vocational education program/TVET colleges accommodates the special educational and training needs of students with disabilities?
15. Does teacher training program of your country include special needs education as one of the streams of the study of regular vocational education teachers?
16. Which government body is responsible to lead and implement the vocational education program?

## ORIGINAL PAPERS

### I

#### **POLICY-PRACTICE GAP IN PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMME OF ETHIOPIA: POLICY CONTENT ANALYSIS**

by

Malle, A., Pirttimaa, R., & Saloviita, T. (2015b)

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Policy-Practice Gap on Participation of Students with Disabilities in the Education and  
Training Programme of Ethiopia: Policy Content Analysis

Abebe Yehualawork Malle, Raija Pirttimaa and Timo Saloviita

### **Abstract**

This study explores the extent to which the issue of special educational and training needs for persons with disabilities is addressed in the education and training policy of Ethiopia, with a specific focus on technical and vocational education and training (TVET). Focus-group discussions and interviews were used to assess the content of the policy and related strategic documents, as well as legal frameworks and implementation instruments, in terms of the principle of inclusion. A pair of focus group discussions involved twenty-two members of the management and governance of four networks and eight indigenous, disability-focused, non-governmental organisations. Moreover, 14 high-profile experts from the ministry were interviewed. Most participants agreed that the issue of disability was not addressed appropriately in issues of strategy and prioritisation. Six recommendations are presented for enhancing the inclusion of individuals with disabilities in education and vocational training.

**Keywords:** persons with disabilities, Ethiopia, policy development and analysis, inclusion, technical and vocational education and training.

Disability is an issue and a reality in any society. According to the definition adopted by United Nations (2006) in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, persons with disabilities “include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments which in interaction with various barriers may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others” (p. 4). It is estimated that more than a billion people, or about 15% of the world’s population, are living with a disability, and 80% of them reside in low-income countries (WHO and World Bank, 2011, p. 29). Of the total population of Ethiopia, 17.6% are estimated to live with some sort of impairment (WHO and World Bank, 2011, p. 272). It has been confirmed that the main challenge of persons with disabilities is related not necessarily to their specific impairment, but to their lack of equal access to various rehabilitation services such as health care, education, employment or social and legal support systems (United Nations, 2011).

Education and vocational training are recognized as important elements of human rights, as endorsed by several documents on human rights (e.g. United Nations, 1948, 1966, 1983b). The World Declaration of Education for All (EFA) was accepted in the UNESCO meeting in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 as a starting point for a global commitment to providing basic, quality education for all children, youths and adults (UNESCO, 2014). The achievements of the EFA were evaluated ten years later in Dakar, Senegal, and new goals were set (UNESCO, 2014). The first Dakar goal was “Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children” (UNESCO, 2014). Aside from such general goals, the educational needs of persons with disabilities have attained specific attention through several international declarations (United Nations, 1983a, 1983b; UNESCO, 1994) and conventions on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006), as well as through national

legislation and other national policy documents.

However, little has been done in developing countries so far to help persons with disabilities to participate in regular education and vocational training, and a clear lack of progress toward the stated goals has been observed (Peters, 2007). According to UNESCO's 2010 Education for All Global Monitoring Report, most of the poorest countries of the world were not on the right track to achieve the 2015 Millennium Development Goals, including achieving universal primary education (UNESCO, 2010). In particular, there was a failure to provide the special educational needs of marginalized groups, especially persons with disabilities. A 2011 UN report confirmed that in developing countries, 90% of children with disabilities still do not have the opportunity to access education (United Nations, 2011).

### **Development in Ethiopia**

Ethiopia, a country located in the Horn of Africa, is one of the poorest countries in the world. However, its economic development during the 21<sup>st</sup> century has been noteworthy (International Monetary Fund, 2014). In Ethiopia, the traditional approach towards supporting persons with disabilities has involved social welfare and socio-medical models that emphasize medical and financial assistance. This orientation has been reflected in most policy and legislative instruments. Alongside the overthrowing of the military government in 1991 and the emergence of a new political system, the Government of Ethiopia introduced several policy and legislative instruments at federal and regional levels, with the objective of addressing the educational and training needs and rights of citizens. These policy and legislative instruments were inspired by the political intentions of the newly emerged transitional government of Ethiopia, and addressed the special educational and vocational needs of persons with disabilities as well (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1994). The shift in policy encompassed the expansion of both primary education and vocational

training in line with the EFA goals (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1994; Lasonen et al., 2005, p. 30). The policy stated that the Government was committed “to enabl[ing] both the handicapped and the gifted to learn in accordance with their potential and needs” (p. 9). In the overall strategy, it was stated that “special education and training will be provided for people with special needs” (p. 17). However, the physical fitness requirements of the teaching profession (p. 20) prevented some individuals with disabilities from becoming teachers. This policy did not recognize, for example, the pedagogical advantage of children with hearing impairment being educated by teachers who use sign language themselves.

A follow-up study confirmed that Ethiopia has made some progress towards the Dakar EFA goals (Lasonen et al., 2005, p. 10). For example, primary-school enrolment tripled during the late nineties and early 2000s. However, Ethiopia was still found to be among the countries with the lowest enrolment rates, with nearly half of all children remaining out of school (Lasonen et al., 2005, p. 10).

In 2012, the revised Special Needs Education Program Strategy (Ministry of Education, 2012) was issued, with the objective of updating and bridging the gaps identified regarding the special education sector. Its overarching objective was “to build an inclusive education system which will provide quality, relevant and equitable education and training to all children, youth and adults with special educational needs and ultimately enable them to fully participate in the socio-economic development of the country” (p. 14). More attention was given to the participation of persons with disabilities in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in this strategy than in previous plans. However, the 2012 revised Special Needs Education Program Strategy (Ministry of Education, 2012) and the 2011–2012 Annual Abstract of the Ministry of Education revealed that only 3.2% of school-aged children with disabilities could get access to education and that the participation of

students with disabilities in the TVET programme was still insignificant.

Some criteria have been presented in scholarship for the purpose of evaluating the validity and efficacy of policies. First, it has been recommended that policies should state their goals, objectives and means of implementation as clearly as possible (Torjman, 2005). Second, it is suggested that policies should be developed in consultation with the stakeholders concerned and with meaningful participation and contributions from communities (Northern Territory Government of Canada, 2000; Smith, 2003). On the basis of this recommendation, Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) should be considered to be partners in the formulation of disability policies. This principle is confirmed in Articles 21, 29 and 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2006), which detail the rights of disabled people to be involved and to be able to express their opinions for consideration in policy formulation and public affairs.

The aim of this study is to explore the extent to which the special educational and training needs of persons with disabilities are addressed in the education and training policy of Ethiopia, as well as the extent to which DPOs have been included in the process. The development of the 1994 Education and Training Policy (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1994) is reviewed and evaluated through interviews with some high-profile Government professionals. Second, the following questions were asked in focus groups with people working in DPOs: 1) how do the participants evaluate the current status of vocational education for individuals with disabilities? 2) How do they evaluate the inclusion of disability issues in Government policies? 3) What do they think the role of disability organisations is within the process of policy formulation?

## **Methods**



### **Participants**

A total of 14 high-profile policymakers and experts were selected for interview using purposive and snowball sampling. The participants were individuals who possessed particular, relevant responsibilities in generating policies and strategies within Ethiopia's education and vocational training sector – Government members and professionals in different departments and positions at the Federal Ministry of Education and the TVET Agency. Some of them were already retired. The informants had relevant experience and qualifications in various disciplines, nine of them being qualified in special needs education (see Table 1).

For the focus-group discussions, 22 individuals were selected from various organisations working on the issue of disability. They were chosen for their seniority and current roles in leading the disability awareness movement in Ethiopia. These discussants were qualified and experienced in different professions and with adaptive skills, such as special needs education, social work, human rights, history, sign language and deaf culture, and gender studies. Some of them were renowned disability awareness activists. The groups were organised into two sessions: the first group consisted of high-profile members of secretariats (management) and the second group comprised Government representatives (managing boards and General Assemblies), as well as representatives of networks and indigenous non-governmental organisations (see Table 1).

-----  
Table 1  
-----

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

One-to-one and face-to-face interviews were conducted with the participants. All interviews were carried out by the first author, together with an assistant who was knowledgeable about, and familiar with, the local context – including Amharic, the language used for the interviews. During the interviews, a friendly approach was applied in order to probe the interviewees' external realities (i.e. facts and events) and their internal experiences (such as feelings and meanings) (Silverman, 2005). All interviews were held at the interviewees' offices, thus offering them a comfortable and practical setting. The data were elicited from the participants with their informed consent and any pieces of information they gave were kept confidential. A three-page guide to the interview questions was prepared and used to maintain interview consistency and quality. Each interview lasted an hour on average and was recorded on an audio-digital recorder with the interviewee's consent.

In the focus-group discussions, participants were divided into two groups, in line with their various roles. The first group consisted of administrators from non-governmental organisations that were responsible for managing day-to-day project activities and administrative issues. The second group consisted of board members of these organisations. Again, the question guide was used and discussions were recorded on video- and audio recorders simultaneously. Each discussion lasted for an average of three hours. During the course of these focus-group discussions, sign-language interpreters and assistants were assigned to facilitate the communication and mobility of participants with hearing, visual and physical impairments.

The question guides for both the interview and focus-group discussions were prepared in English and then translated into Amharic, facilitating the contribution and active engagement of the participants in the study. The guides were prepared in an open-ended format and were organised to contain what, where, why and how questions in order to probe the informants'

ideas effectively.

The ideas, views and narrations gained from the respondents through the interviews and focus-group discussions were transcribed into an 86-page document and then categorized by thematic issues, which were then described and, finally, analyzed (Bryman, 2008).

## **Results**

### **High-profile Interviewees**

The interviews with high-profile experts and Government members provided a general picture of the process of policy planning. The overall preparation of the draft policy was carried out by different task forces, established by the ministry. The members of these task forces were recruited from various departments of the ministry, from Addis Ababa University and from civic societies (such as the National Teachers Association) and line ministries. It was estimated that nearly 200 professionals, policy experts and consultants took part in the overall process. Among them were experts in special-needs education.

A number of platforms were organised by the Ministry of Education to facilitate discussion between the task forces and the compiling of their findings into a single draft document. A situational analysis was also carried out via a baseline survey and through reviews of the experiences of other countries. The results of the survey enabled the experts to map out the core drawbacks of the former regime's education and training system. Two interviewees stated that the survey results revealed the former education and training system to be poor in "quality/relevance, efficiency, coverage and justice, and it was highly centralized, with the absence of a systematic approach and strategy to ensure the principles of equality and equity". They intimated that in the former education system, issues relating to gender and to pastoral and special-needs education were not addressed properly. The

interviewees argued that the baseline survey contributed to the inclusion of special educational and training needs in the policy because it revealed the existing shortages.

Six interviewees considered the issue of disability to be addressed effectively by the new policy. According to one participant, this was evident because the issue of disability was cited as one of the policy's specific objectives. However, all except two interviewees believed that the content of the 1994 Education and Training Policy remained limited with regard to the basic and special educational and vocational training needs of persons with disabilities. Of 14 interviewees, nine asserted that one of the shortcomings of the policy was that needs assessment was not conducted at community level. One expert in special needs education confirmed that there was strong pressure to include the requirement for teachers' physical and mental fitness in the policy.

The interviewees stated that while the policy documents of the former military government were used as guiding instruments, the 1994 Education and Training Policy changed the country's education and training system radically. Specifically, the new policy transformed a highly centralized arrangement into a federal administrative system.

### **Focus-group Participants**

The participants in the two focus-group discussions stressed that the Ministry of Education had a responsibility to ensure the equal participation of all citizens in education and training programmes. They expressed the unanimous opinion that the issue of disability was mentioned in the policy only as a "passing remark" and using the traditional, and in most cases derogatory, terminology of "handicap".

They also argued that the treatment of special educational and training needs in the policy did not corresponded explicitly with the core thematic statements of the policy, such as curriculum development, student measurement and examinations, and quality education.

They felt that the issue of disability was handled vaguely in the policy, in a way that was open to negative interpretation. They suspected that the policy statement may not be compatible with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

The participants agreed that the presence of the issue of disability in the 1994 Education and Training Policy was more-or-less the result of a donor-driven initiative. They argued further that if it had been a home-grown initiative, the country could have achieved more tangible change and progress in providing accessible educational and vocational training opportunities and facilities to persons with disabilities.

Of the participants thirty believed that human rights principles were not taken into account in the policy with regard to the educational and training needs of persons with disabilities. The use of the term “handicap” in one of the specific objectives of the 1994 Education and Training Policy document was presented as an example of this argument.

The participants presented several possible reasons why disability issues were not addressed properly (according to them) in the policy; first, attitudinal and cognitive factors (including the influence of the traditional socio-medical model on the understanding of disability and a lack of commitment to, and awareness about, such issues). Second, there were organisational reasons (such as the absence of a responsible ministerial department with the capacity to influence policy experts to consider the issue of disability in policy statements). It was also cited that individuals with disabilities lacked opportunities to be involved in the preparation of the draft policy, and DPOs were not invited to take part in consultative workshops and meetings. The high-profile interviewees also agreed that DPOs were not given the opportunity to participate in the process of preparing the draft policy. Finally, participants mentioned that there was an absence of a united voice among disability policy organisations and special needs education professionals.

### **Common Findings**

Almost all the participants stated that they were familiar with the concept of inclusion in matters of disability. They all claimed to have appropriate knowledge about environmental, attitudinal and institutional barriers in the country's education and training sector. Only a minority of participants (20) were conscious of restrictions concerning the participation of persons with disabilities in technical and vocational education and training programmes.

All but three participants expressed that Ethiopia's 1994 Education and Training Policy did not address the basic and special educational and training needs of persons with disabilities fully and adequately. Hence, the policy should be revised, with the objectives of revitalizing the internationally recognized educational and training rights of citizens with disabilities and making the policy statements compatible with the principles of special needs education. In light of this idea, these participants (particularly the members who took part in the focus-group discussions) argued that the issue of disability should be one of the policy's priority actions, with a view to promoting and enhancing the educational and training needs of children, youths and adults with disabilities.

### **Discussion**

The opinions of the two groups of participants in this study differed in many respects; the representatives of disability organisations were more critical towards the disability policy than the high-profile Government representatives and professionals in the field. It was agreed that the role of disability organisations was minute in terms of the formulation of the 1994 Education and Training Policy, a document used as a precedent for the preparation and development of legislative and implementational instruments. The representatives of disability organisations and the majority of the high-profile interviewees concurred that the

issue of disability was not addressed adequately in the 1994 Policy. According to those participants representing various civic disability organisations, there was a lack of awareness about the issue of disability among the policy experts and policymakers involved in the process of preparing and developing the policy. In this respect, the fact that DPOs were not invited to take part in the preparation process was an evident drawback.

As the results of the study showed, a genuine disability-inclusive policy that recognizes the special educational needs of persons with disabilities is required by the Ethiopian education sector. The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994) highlights that states should “adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education, enrolling all children in regular schools, unless there are compelling reasons for doing otherwise” (p. 9). The declaration explains further that an inclusive approach in the education and vocational training sector is “the most effective means of combating discriminatory attitudes, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all” (p. 9).

As confirmed by the opinions of participants in this study, the 1994 Education and Training Policy needs to be revised in order to guarantee unambiguous policy formulations that promote the educational and training needs and rights of persons with disabilities. In this respect, the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (1994) calls upon states to “give the highest policy and budgetary priority to improving their education systems to enable them to include all children regardless of individual differences or difficulties” (p. 9).

Based on the gaps in policy uncovered by this study, the following major areas of focus can be recommended to improve the participation of students with disabilities in the country’s regular education and training system, especially in the field of technical and

vocational training and education:

1. Revise and rescind the discriminatory provisions cited in the policy and related implementation documents, in line with the declaration and principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
2. Exert pressure on the TVET Agency and line regional agencies to mainstream the special training needs of persons with disabilities in their directives, recruitment criteria and other related instruments, or develop a disability-specific strategic document that provides reasonable and clear direction on which specific fields of study should be accessible to those with particular impairments.
3. Establish a strong and practical horizontal relationship between the TVET Agency and the Special Support and Inclusive Education Directorate within the general education stream at all levels of the system in the ministry, with a view to exchanging information and responsibilities via a partnership that promotes the vocational empowerment of disabled people.
4. Enhance the awareness of policy experts and other relevant professionals, including high-profile positions in the ministry in general and in the TVET Agency in particular, by implementing consecutive lobbying dialogues and other mechanisms.
5. Promote the contact of DPOs with the ministry and the TVET Agency by strengthening their involvement in the overall activities of the sector.
6. Prepare and submit alternative policy ideas that could serve as source documents for the development of instruments that ensure the participation of persons with disabilities in the country's TVET programme on an equal basis with others.

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Table 1 *Profiles of the Participants of the Study*

Characteristics	Focus Group Discussion (n = 22)	Interview (n = 14)
Sex		
Male	14	13
Female	8	1
Age		
18–30	5	1
31–45	9	1
46 +	8	12
Qualifications		
Diploma	2	-
Degree	8	3
MA	12	10
PhD/Professor	-	1
Position		
Managers	12	4
Experts	-	5
Deputy Ministers	-	2
High Government Profile		
Members of Governance	10	-
Retired	-	3
Work Experience in Years		
1–15	6	-
16–30	15	3
31 +	1	11
Type of Impairment		
Visual Impairment	11	-
Hearing Impairment	2	-
Multiple Impairments	1	-
Physical Impairment	-	-
Nondisabled	8	14

Focus-group Discussion Participants represented the following organisations: NETWORKS: the Federation of Ethiopian National Associations of Persons with Disabilities (FENAPD), the Network of Organisations for the Visually Impaired and the Blind (NOVIB), the Community Based Rehabilitation Network Ethiopia (CBRN-E), the Ethiopian National Disability Action Network (ENDAN), INDIGENOUS NGOs: Ethiopian National

Association of the Blind (ENAB), Yemsrach Center, Ethiopian National Association of the Deaf (ENAD), Help for Persons with Disabilities Organisation (HPD-O), Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development (ECDD), Information and Development for Persons with Disabilities Association (IDPDA), Special Needs Education Professionals Association (SNEPA) and Ethiopian Women with Disabilities National Association (EWDNA).

## II

### **INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN FORMAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN ETHIOPIA**

by

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**INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN FORMAL VOCATIONAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN ETHIOPIA****Abebe Yehualawork Malle****Raija Pirttimaa****Timo Saloviita***University of Jyväskylä*

*In Ethiopia, individuals with disabilities have limited access to educational and vocational training opportunities. This study investigates prevailing challenges and opportunities for the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education programs in Ethiopia. Data for the study were gathered from the five biggest regions out of the 11 in the country by selecting two colleges of technical and vocational education from each region. A total of 110 trainers and 28 students with disabilities from the selected colleges completed the questionnaire. In addition, 30 regional and college-level administrators were interviewed. Finally, all 10 colleges were evaluated through direct observation in terms of the accessibility of their physical environments. The results revealed significant barriers that limited full participation of students with disabilities, such as lack of adaptive educational materials and facilities, lack of trained trainers, and systematic exclusion of students with disabilities. The results are discussed with a focus on the need for continued improvement of vocational and technical education considering international and national strategies that endorse the rights of people with disabilities.*

In developing countries, individuals with disabilities typically live in extreme poverty and dependency. One of the reasons for this is limited access to basic services such as education and vocational training. A strong interaction has been confirmed between disability and poverty, with disability causing poverty, and poverty triggering impairment and disabilities (UNESCO *et al.*, 2004). In Ethiopia, poverty, ignorance, war, disease and harmful traditional practices have been shown to be the major causes of impairments (Tirusew & Alemayehu, 2008). Consequently, the vicious circle of disability and poverty tend to expose persons with disabilities to extreme exclusion and marginalization. Exclusion from education leads to exclusion from the labour market, and this in turn, leads to poverty and dependency on others for income and support.

In many developed countries, the issue of disability is included in development policies and recognized as an essential part of human rights concerns. An example of this is The Americans with Disabilities Act Title II Regulations (Department of Justice, 2010). However, in several countries, persons with disabilities remain the most neglected section of society. During the last quarter of the 20th century, the United Nations (UN) increasingly began to pay attention towards persons with disabilities. UN documents and human rights instruments have now contributed significantly to the change and progress at international and national levels in this respect. These documents include, among others, The UN World Program of Action Concerning Disabled People (United Nations, 1983), The Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 1993), The Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994) and The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006).

In the field of technical and vocational education, significant progress was made following the launching of the Education for All movement by UNESCO and several other international organizations in 1990 (UNESCO, 2014). Its third goal encompasses the development of skills, including technical and vocational skills (UNESCO, 2014). The success of the EFA program in the field of skill development, however, has remained low. According to the 2012 monitoring report, an estimated 11% of secondary school pupils were enrolled in such programmes (UNESCO, 2012, 4).

Several strategies have been recommended to overcome employment-related challenges faced by individuals with disabilities. For instance, Beresford (1996) suggested relevant strategies such as providing increased education and employment training opportunities, encouraging flexible and accessible employment, meeting the additional costs of impairment and challenging prejudice against people with disabilities. Especially, in countries where individuals with disabilities lead a destitute life owing to poverty, vocational education is an ideal instrument to promote their economic empowerment and overall welfare.

#### *Why Technical and Vocational Education?*

In the advanced world, there is a growing need of skilled labour in industries. This creates the need to improve the quality of vocational education in order to upgrade the vocational skills of the workforce (McFarland & Vickers, 1994). In some countries, vocational training is a synonym for respectable middle-level training, while in other countries, it is considered as a level that some people choose for the lack of better alternatives (McFarland & Vickers, 1994). In developing countries, vocational education and training can be considered as a foremost instrument for poverty reduction. Individuals who can access education and vocational training are better poised to progress in all aspects of life. Recognizing this reality, the right to education and training has been established through several international instruments that have global endorsement, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26 (United Nations, 1948), and Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 28 (United Nations, 1989).

Vocational education is a significant investment because of its contribution to socioeconomic prosperity of nations. The idea that ‘...sustainable growth, competitiveness, innovation and social inclusion’ could be achieved by training citizens to be knowledgeable, skilful and competent in various types of vocations is simple and straightforward (Zarifis, 2010, 201).

In many countries, vocational training programs are designed to serve people of all ages and training needs. This includes young school dropouts, technically talented students seeking additional training beyond high school, veteran workers needing retraining and women returning to the workforce. Moreover, with the passage of time, socioeconomically disadvantaged groups living on the fringes of a society, including persons with disabilities, have come to be able to enjoy the benefits of technical and vocational education and training programs.

#### *Historical Background of Vocational Education in Ethiopia*

Ethiopia is a large country located in the Horn of Africa with a population of about 94 million (World Bank, 2014). It is one of the worlds’ oldest civilizations but is currently one of the poorest and least developed countries in the world with a per-capita income of \$470 in 2013 (World Bank, 2014) and a ranking of 173/187 in the 2013 UNDP Human Development Index (United Nations, 2014).

The origin of advanced technical and vocational skills in Ethiopia can be traced back to ancient Axumite, and medieval Zagwe and Gondarian civilizations. Artisans constructed magnificent monuments, which are currently designated international heritage sites by UNESCO. However, these cultural advancements were lost over the subsequent centuries. Fresh groundbreaking progress in technical and vocational education started during the Italian occupation (1935-1941), which paved the way for the foundation of several vocational education schools. These schools were established mainly to serve the Italian colonial interest, which was geared towards exploiting the natural resources of the country (Takele, 2008).

In the post-liberation period, a professional workforce was crucial for meeting the skilled human power requirements of the industrial and commercial sectors. Several new technical and vocational schools and colleges were opened during the three decades after liberation (Wanna, 1996). The proclamation of the 1994 Education and Training Policy (Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, 1994) was a turning point in the educational system of the country. It resulted in reforms within existing technical and vocational education and training programs. Following pronouncement of the policy, vocational education programs were reformed, and noticeable results were observed in the sector, such as a rapid rise in the number of vocational education institutions accompanied by high enrolment of students in such institutions. Based on this national education and training policy, the Federal Ministry of Education stipulated Technical and Vocational Education and Training Proclamation No.391/2004 (Ministry of Education, 2004) and The National Technical and Vocational Education and Training Strategy (Ministry of Education, 2008) that enhanced the mission and the overall program objectives. This strategy envisions producing skilled human power to meet the growing demand for labour in the market. According to the strategic direction of this document, ‘Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) in Ethiopia seeks to create competent and self-reliant citizens to contribute to the economic and social development of the country, thus improving the livelihoods of all Ethiopians and sustainably reducing poverty’ (Ministry of Education, 2008). In addition, as one of component programs related to the education



sector, vocational education was included in the education sector development programs launched in 1997 (Ministry of Education ESDP I, 1997).

#### *Disability and Vocational Education: Challenges and Opportunities*

The first and the second World Wars, while increasing the number of disabled persons in industrialised nations, brought more visibility and attention to the idea of rehabilitation. Policies for employment and vocational rehabilitation of disabled people arose out of the need to provide for those injured in the wars (Helander, 1999). From the 1960s, UNESCO started including among its objectives the special educational and vocational training needs of persons with disabilities. This initiative developed into a principle according to which TVET systems must be open and all inclusive to ensure that even the most underprivileged individuals have access to learning and training (UNESCO & ILO, 2002, 8).

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2006) recognized the availability and accessibility of education and vocational training for persons with disabilities from the human rights perspective. Based on the universal assumptions endorsed officially by this and other human rights instruments, UN member states initiated efforts to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in vocational education programs.

In developed countries such as U.S.A., a considerable amount of information is available on the vocational status of people with disabilities and their vocational education. According to a research review by Harvey (2001), the majority of people with disabilities in U.S.A were not working. However, it was observed that vocational education had some positive impact on post-school employment in this group. It was concluded that enhancing the job skills and employability of persons with disabilities was an important goal of secondary education. The 2011 UN report confirmed that in developing countries, 90% of children with disabilities continue to lack access to education (United Nations, 2011). UNICEF (2014) estimated that about 98% of children with disabilities in Ethiopia had no access to school or vocational training.

In line with the newly emerging, internationally recognized opportunities, the Ethiopian government has made endeavours to provide vocational training to persons with disabilities through formal technical and vocational education programs. Under its specific objectives, the National TVET Strategy (Ministry of Education, 2008) confirmed that special support will be provided to disadvantaged students, including students with disabilities, in the form of affirmative action to ensure their full participation in the country's middle-level technical and vocational training programs.

It has been observed that students with disabilities enrolled in vocational education and training programs report facing more barriers compared with their peers without disabilities (Cocks & Thoresen, 2013). The most commonly reported barriers are related to lack of resources, while support is reported as the most important factor in facilitating course completion (Cocks & Thoresen, 2013). Menbere (2007) summarized the major factors that continued challenging the participation of students with disabilities, such as type of disability, lack of trained personnel, lack of training and employment opportunities, attitudinal problems, national policy limitation, architectural barriers and lack of coordination. Another list of barriers presented includes inaccessible buildings, communication systems, infrastructure, lack of assistive devices and psychological barriers in the minds of people with disabilities (ILO/Japan Technical Consultation on Vocational Training and Employment, 2003).

This study aims to investigate various barriers faced by and opportunities for by students with disabilities who participated in formal vocational education programs in Ethiopia. Data were collected via semi-structured interviews with regional and TEVT colleges' administrators and questionnaire-based interviews with students with disabilities and their trainers, as well as by observing the physical accessibility of educational environments. Recommendations for better training/participation of persons with disabilities were collected from all participants.

## **Methods**

### *Participants*

The research was carried out in five regions out of nine regional states and two city governments of Ethiopia. The selected regions were Addis Ababa city government, Oromiya, Amhara, SNNP and Tigray. These five regions were selected based on their larger size and the fact that they represent 89.59% of the total population of the country. Moreover, major cities with a large number of persons with disabilities are located in these regions. Out of the 348 government TVET colleges, 327 colleges are located in these regions.

In addition to the regional TVET bureaus and agencies, two technical and vocational education and training colleges were selected from each region using purposive sampling. The selection was based on three criteria. First, colleges that provided training opportunities to students with disabilities were selected. Second, colleges with larger numbers of enrolled students and offering more fields of studies in comparison to others were preferred. Third, colleges that were recognized as leading institutions by their respective regional TVET Bureau or Agency owing to their experience, academic strength and seniority were chosen.

A total of 168 individuals selected from these organizations participated in the study. Fifteen TVET college trainers who were requested to participate in the study were not willing to complete the questionnaire. In the context of the Ethiopian Vocational education, teachers, instructors and trainers are the terms which have been used interchangeably, but *trainer* is the preferable one and thus used here. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 11 administrators from regional TVET bureaus and 19 college deans, deputy deans and heads of different programs. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 110 vocational education trainers and 28 students with disabilities.

The administrators were at high posts in regional TVET Bureaus/Agencies, Such as deans and deputy deans, and program leaders such as planners of TVET colleges. Almost all of such persons from the targeted institutions were willing to give information. Thus, 30 administrators from regional TVET Bureaus or Agencies and TVET colleges participated. Of them, 90% were male and 10% were female. Most of them were between 41 and 50 years of age. Of them, 12 were qualified at the BA level, and 18 at the MA level; most had worked in the field for more than 15 years (77%).

In each targeted TVET college, there are more than 100 trainers. About 10 trainers from each college were selected randomly from the list of trainers of each field of study (e.g. automotive and other manufacturing industries, tourism and hotel management, garment and textile) in collaboration with the targeted TVET college managements. Finally, 110 trainers with relevant experience and qualification in various vocations participated in the study. Among them, 85 % were male and 15 % were female. Half of the respondents were 18–30 years old, 20 % were 31–40 years old and 30 % were above 41 years. Their academic qualifications ranged from the certificate level to the MA level. A breakdown is as follows: certificate (2%), diploma (20%), BA (45%) and MA (33%). Their work experience varied from less than 6 years (35%) to more than 21 years (18%).

Twenty-eight 28 students with disabilities were selected randomly from the colleges considered in the study. Among them, 61% were male and 39% were female. Half of them were 10–20 years of age, and the remaining half were 21–30 years of age. Of them, 19 were physically impaired (wheelchair or crutch users), two hearing impaired, two visually impaired and five had multiple impairments. They were scattered across grade levels 1–4. Of the hearing-impaired students, 15 were not interested in completing the questionnaire, deeming the process boring owing to a lack of positive expectation from the contribution of such studies in the Ethiopian context.

#### *Data Collection*

To contact and gather data from the study participants, the first author travelled across the five selected regions in Ethiopia. Among these regions, Tigray and Amhara are located at an average of 800 km from the capital.

**Table 1. Participants and Data Collection**

Participants	N	Data collection method
Administrators		
regional	11	Interviews
colleges	19	Interviews
Vocational education trainers	110	Questionnaires
Students with disabilities	28	Questionnaires
TVET Colleges	10	Systematic observation

*Interviews.* Face-to-face interviews were conducted to generate information from high-level leaders of regional TVET Bureaus/Agencies and TVET colleges. An interview guide was prepared to maintain quality and consistency across interviews, and all interviews were recorded using a digital recorder. The content of the interview guide was designed with a focus on support services and regional TVET Bureaus/Agencies and colleges' efforts toward addressing the special training needs of students with disabilities. Data was gathered with informants' consent at locations convenient to them, and the data gathered from the study participants has been kept confidential. The interview guide contained 16 basic questions, and each interview lasted an average of 1 h. The recorded interviews were transcribed into text, which ran in to 80 pages.

*Questionnaires.* Semi-structured questionnaires were prepared to be completed by students with disabilities and their trainers. The questionnaires were distributed to both students with disabilities and trainers. The filled questionnaires were then collected and analysed. The questionnaire for students with disabilities was translated into Amharic to facilitate students with disabilities to understand the concepts underlying the questions and answer them properly. The questions focused on the challenges faced by students with disabilities, as well as the effects, positive or negative, of the services made available to them on their participation in vocational education. For instance, the students were asked about the availability of adaptive educational materials, status of the accessibility of the physical environments of TVET colleges and the response of trainers towards their special educational and training needs.

*Observation.* The emphasis of observation was on the physical environment of the 10 selected TVET colleges. The first author, who is visually impaired, conducted these observations with the help of his research assistant. The assistant was trained to complete the observations, and having worked in the disability field for 30 years, she is familiar with disability-related issues. The observation targeted the status of physical accessibility for students with disabilities. The observation checklist was prepared by consulting the accessibility requirements listed in relevant UN documents including the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, 1993, and The Convention on The Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006. The focus was on the accessibility of pedestrian walkways, lobbies and corridors, classrooms, toilet buildings and signage. The checklist contained 12 basic items. An average of 1 h was spent in conducting observations in each college. During the process of observation, pictures and notes were taken to organize and analyze the findings.

#### *Data Analysis*

The data collected using each method was organized thematically. The themes focused on the main challenges in the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education and past recommendations to promote better opportunities. The information gathered from the study participants and observations was categorized based on the outlined thematic issues. The inductive approach was used for the analysis, and the thematic issues were linked with the information gathered from the study participants (Patton, 1990; Braun & Clarke 2006). Percentages and frequencies were calculated as well. The major findings were interpreted in reference to relevant documents.

#### *Findings*

##### *Preparedness of Colleges*

The administrators were asked about the problems faced and existing best practices with regard to accepting students with disabilities in colleges. Twenty-seven administrators out of 30 reported that students with disabilities unsuitable for acceptance in some fields of study, especially in fields requiring 'hard skills' such as automotive, manufacturing, construction and electricity. These administrators believed that students with mild physical impairments were more likely to be accepted in these fields of study over students with other types of impairments. The administrators preferred that students with disabilities rather join 'soft courses' such as accounting, business, ICT etc. However, they explained that no general guidelines existed for stipulating which type of impairment was compatible with which fields of study.

Students unanimously agreed that they had limited access and opportunities to join the desired field of study. The majority of students, 19 of 28, stated that they were not supported by vocational counsellors in identify the fields of study best suited to their impairment.

Several factors were identified from the responses of trainers and administrators as hindrances preventing students with disabilities from attending training, particularly in hard courses. These include the lack of trainers qualified to train students with disabilities in both hard and soft fields of study; non-availability and/or lack of relevant adaptive technology, mainly machineries required to make possible the participation of students with disabilities in vocational training programs; prevailing knowledge gap concerning the existence of such assistive technology; failure to consider mobilizing and allocating financial resources for the transfer of the technology for this purpose and the assumption that hard courses are not suitable for students with disabilities in some cases for safety reasons. In this respect, almost all administrators substantiated the argument citing the example that training machines with sound signals are not suitable for training students with hearing impairment.

The observations showed that the average height of the training machines ranged from 90 cm to 1.6 m. This height was unsuitable for physically impaired students who use a wheelchair to operate the machines properly. Moreover, the loom machines used for imparting training in weaving were not accessible to students with physical impairment in the lower limbs because the reason that the pedals of these machines are designed to be operated by lower limbs. However, one of the targeted TVET colleges which was given a mandate of

transferring technology and knowledge in the form of a tailor-made training program and the modification of such loom machines to be operated by hand. Thus, they were made accessible to students with physical impairment of upper limbs.

One of the administrators explained her experience with the challenges that applicants with disabilities may encounter during registration as follows:

*While I was a deputy dean of one of the polytechnic colleges two years ago, I received a complaint from a student with physical impairment. The student had deformity on a part of her face, and upper and lower limbs due to epilepsy-related accidents. The applicant was highly interested in joining a front operation (reception) training program in the hotel management vocation. After the orientation conducted by the college management, she was registered in the department of hotel management studies based on her inclination/interest to be trained in frontline service in the hotel industry. However, the principal trainer of the department rejected her registration, and she refused to accept her choice believing that the student will not be able to secure a job in frontline hotel service or an apprentice/cooperative trainee owing to her deformed physical appearance. Nonetheless, the student insisted on her choice, and the college management stood by her, recognizing her choice based on the principle that students have the right to pick a course of their choice without exception in line with their inclination and interest. However, the principal trainer, too, insisted on her decision, and she gave me a serious warning that if the student is allowed to take part in the training, she will submit an official resignation to the college management. Regardless of the trainer's concerns, I sincerely tried to sensitize and convince her to recognize the inalienable training rights of the student and respect the student's choice. Finally, after heated debate and negotiation, the deadlock was resolved by convincing the student to change her field of study to IT. This case study vividly substantiates the fact that students with disabilities were not at complete liberty to join a field of study of their choice and proclivity.*

Similarly, three administrators stated that some students with disabilities were coerced to leave their field of study owing to their impairment. One of these administrators stated

*The application of physically impaired students for training as rural agriculture development agents was rejected owing to the assumption that the stakeholders who employ development agents, mainly the ministry of agriculture, may not be willing to accept the trainee because the work requires long distance journeys from one peasant locality to another.*

As another aspect of the problem, one of the participants revealed a student with hearing impairment enrolled in a hydraulics course in one of the TVET colleges in Oromiya region was pushed to leave the college and his study after his impairment was detected under the assumption that hearing capacity is needed for such training and in the associated jobs.

Twenty-one out of 30 administrators believed that harmful cultural beliefs prevailing in society, which disregard the potential and capacity of persons with disabilities, too, contributed to lower participation of students with disabilities in vocational training programs. They further argued that persons with disabilities themselves lacked the self-confidence and motivation required to join the training programs assuming that they may not secure a job on completion of the training. A total of 16 students out of 28 believed that the society, including college communities, did not believe in their success in vocational education. However, 19 students believed that upon completing their training, they would not face discrimination in job opportunities. In contrast, 62% of the trainers believed that there was no demand in the labour market for trained students with disabilities owing to entrenched negative attitudes of society towards disability.

#### *Physical Environment Accessibility*

A total of 64% of the students and 100% of the administrators stated that the physical environment, mainly buildings and sidewalks in the campuses, were not accessible to students with disabilities, especially to those with visual or physical impairments. The topography of the college compounds was described as rugged and marked by physical features such as open ditches or poles erected on pedestrian walkways. Particularly, roads and older buildings were not accessible.

Observations inside the physical structures of the colleges focused on lobbies, classrooms, corridors, toilets, office premises and walkways. The findings confirmed that with the exception of a few buildings, these

facilities were not accessible by students with disabilities. The toilet rooms were not accessible, particularly by wheelchair users and visually impaired students. The lobbies and corridors of buildings and workshops lacked adequate space for the wheelchair movement.

#### *Adjusted Facilities and Pedagogical Services*

A total of 68% of students and 87.2% of trainers considered that adaptive training and educational materials were not available to them. All participants (trainers, students and administrative staff) noted that the basic services particular significant for addressing the special training needs of students with disabilities were not made available at all levels of the vocational education sector. In this regard, the administrators listed the following drawbacks:

- No budget allocation for special needs education;
- No availability of special needs education coordinators at all levels of the sector;
- Inaccessibility of physical environment, including training facilities such as workshops in colleges;
- Failure to include the issue of disability in the annual action plan of regional TVET Bureaus/Agencies and colleges;
- Lack of screening and need-assessment tools concerning the type of impairment and special training needs of students with disabilities.
- The respondent trainers and students with disabilities also attributed the problem to the following five major reasons:
  - Absence of readiness and initiative at all levels of the training system to take responsibility to meet these needs;
  - Students with disabilities were not able to demand their rights and pressurise the concerned bodies to fulfil these educational and training needs;
  - Failure to recognize access to said resources and services as educational and training rights of the students with disabilities, and considering the grant of such access as a favour or optional privilege;
  - Non-availability of adaptive training technology and experience learned from other countries that have adopted best practices in promoting the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education;
  - Lack of opportunity for trainers to be trained in special needs education and as adaptive skills for training students with disabilities. In this regard, 75.4 % of the trainers confirmed that they have not had the opportunity, formal or informal, to be trained in special needs education.

A total of 81.8 % of trainers and 100% of students confirmed that tutorial support was not available in regular vocational training programs. A total of 61% of the trainers reported that they did not include methods and procedures in their lesson plans to meet the special educational needs of disabled students. These trainers gave the following reasons:

- They have not been trained to deal with the special educational needs of students with disabilities;
- Some believed that disabled students had to succeed through their own effort;
- Preferential or special support to disabled students would result in the neglect of and consequent disadvantage to other students;
- There were no disabled students in the classes they taught.

A total of 60% of trainers believed that students with disabilities could attend training in inclusive class setting. The remaining 40% identified the following challenges in the course of instructing classes consisting of students with and without disabilities.

- Inability to appreciate the special educational needs of trainees with disabilities;
- Lack of access to training in the area of special needs education;
- Total absence or inadequate number of itinerant trainers assigned to support regular trainers in addressing the special educational needs of students with disabilities;
- No availability of adaptive training materials/equipment.

A total of 73.6% of trainers acknowledged that they were not informed about national or international policies, or legal instruments concerning the participation of students with disabilities in vocational training and general education programs.

Regardless of these barriers, the study participants identified existing opportunities for the enrolment of students

with disabilities in vocational education programs. A total of 75% of the participant students with disabilities mentioned the availability of soft skills programs suitable to the special needs of students with disabilities and the fact that the enrolment of students with disabilities was being treated under affirmative rules and actions. A total of 14 administrators substantiated that such initiatives were launched in the Tigray and Amhara regions for increasing the level of participation of students with disabilities in vocational education. A total of 28 administrators further argued the fact that the strategy of vocational training programs in the country is 'competence-based', flexible and accessible. The existence of a strategic direction to bring disabled persons into the mainstream and the availability of alternative fields of study are considered as additional prospects for enhancing the participation of students with disabilities in such programs.

#### *Recommendations of Participants*

Study participants, both students and trainers, were encouraged to make suggestions for ensuring better inclusion of students with disabilities in TVET programs. Several recommendations were presented. They are grouped here under six main themes.

*Learning materials and skilful staff.* Both students and trainers underlined the necessity for adaptive learning materials and tools. Trainers were also keen to enhance the roles played by themselves in relation to the participation of students with disabilities in vocational studies. In particular, they stressed the need for staff trained in special needs education.

*Curriculum and vocational counselling.* Both trainers and students demanded modification and adaptation of the curriculum to address the special training needs of disabled students. They proposed that the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education programs should be mentioned in the curriculum. There is a demand to organize training activities. In addition, trainers suggested that all such efforts should be made an integral part of the annual action plans of the Federal TVET Agency, Regional TVET Bureaus/Agencies and TVET Colleges. Students with disabilities recommended the provision of vocational counselling to help them choose suitable careers. Such counselling should take place during the process of selection of a field of study.

*Attitudes.* Both students and trainers noticed that there is a need to develop and apply non-discriminatory attitudes and approaches to the special needs of students with disabilities. Trainers emphasized the need for persistent efforts at the community level, not only to shape the attitudes of people but also to combat harmful practices.

*Accessibility.* Student participants indicated the need for friendly transportation services and accessible physical environments in TVET colleges and local communities. Social accessibility is essential as well: people with disabilities need support and encouragement in vocational education. Sign language interpreters were mentioned in particular as a means of support for academic/training performance and success of students with hearing impairment.

*Employability.* Students demanded that colleges ensure the employability of trainees with disabilities through cooperative training. Trainers did not comment on this issue.

*Research.* Trainers believed that research could result in positive changes for students with disabilities in TVET colleges. They mentioned that a national survey on the major challenges hindering the participation of students with disabilities in formal vocational education programs should be undertaken. In addition, efforts should be launched at the local level for monitoring and evaluating the overall participation of students with disabilities in TVET programs, as well as to bring the issue of disability in the mainstream by using suitable reporting formats at all levels of the sector. Assessments of the special training needs of students with disabilities in terms of the local context should be conducted as well.

#### **Discussion**

This study aimed to verify the status of the inclusion of students with disabilities in formal vocational educational programs in Ethiopia. It was found that the physical environments of TVET colleges, such as buildings, walkways and other essential structures, were not accessible by person with disabilities, particularly by persons with visual and physical impairments. Various physical obstacles hindered the mobility of persons with disabilities in these institutions. This was in contrast with the legislation on accessibility of the environment passed by the Ethiopian government in 2010 as per Article 9(4) of the Constitution (Federal Republic of Ethiopia, 1995), and confirmed in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Article 9 of the Convention stipulates that 'States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to

information and communications' (United Nations, 2006).

Moreover, the study identified further contributory factors that limited the participation of students with disabilities in vocational training. The main ones were acute shortage of adaptive training materials and equipment such as machines accessible by physically and hearing impaired students, inadequate pedagogical preparation on the part of trainers in terms of the special training needs of students with disabilities and lack of special support for the students with disabilities, such as the provision of tutorial classes. The need for such provisions was confirmed in rule 6 of the UN Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. It says that 'Education in mainstream schools presupposes the provision of interpreter and other appropriate support services, and adequate accessibility and support services, designed to meet the needs of persons with different disabilities, should be provided' (United Nations, 1993, 15).

As confirmed by the findings of the study, the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education was limited due to various factors. Nonetheless, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 2 and 23) of 1989 stipulates that member states allocate the necessary resources and other support so that children with disability can access education. Moreover, the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Article 24(5), (p.18) stipulates that 'States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are able to access general tertiary education, vocational training, adult education and lifelong learning without discrimination and on an equal basis with others'.

Regardless of the prevailing challenges that curtail the inclusion of students with disabilities in vocational education programs in the country, the findings also divulged promising progress in the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education programs. Impressive efforts were carried out in some regional TVET Bureaus/Agencies to promote the inclusion of students with disabilities in the vocational programs through affirmative action.

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### **III**

## **INCLUSIVENESS IN THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS OF KENYA AND TANZANIA**

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## Inclusiveness in the Vocational Education Policy and Legal Frameworks of Kenya and Tanzania

Abebe Yehualawork Malle<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Education, University of Jyväskylä, Finland

Correspondence: Abebe Yehualawork Malle, Department of Education, P.O Box 35, FI-40014, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. E-mail: abework2011@yahoo.com

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### Abstract

This study examines the status of inclusiveness in the education and training policies of Ethiopia in comparison to those of selected East African countries. The focus is on vocational education in terms of the special educational and training needs of students with disabilities. Focus group discussions and interviews conducted in Kenya and Tanzania, relevant policy document analysis and the findings of Article 1 of the study were used as primary sources for the research. A total of 18 representatives of DPOs from Kenya and Tanzania participated in two sessions of focus group discussions, and 15 high-profile figures and experts from concerned government bodies of these study countries were interviewed. Most of the study participants agreed that the issue of disability was not adequately addressed in the education and training policies or the legal and implementation instruments of the study countries. The participants also proposed valuable recommendations.

**Keywords:** accessible environment, implementation instruments, inclusive education system, policy, special educational/training needs of students with disabilities, vocational education

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1 Aims

The main purpose of this study is to assess the status of inclusiveness in the vocational education and training policies and legal frameworks of Kenya and Tanzania regarding the special training needs and concerns of people with disabilities. Special attention was given to the participation of people with disabilities and their organisations in the preparation of the policy and legal frameworks. The findings are then compared with the situation in Ethiopia. Kenya and Tanzania were selected due to their geographical and socio cultural proximity to Ethiopia.

#### 1.2 Background

Effective vocational skills training is an essential prerequisite for the creation of a productive workforce that contributes to the socioeconomic development of a country. Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has been defined as developing ways of learning and the acquisition of attitudes that facilitate success in the workplace (Ngure, 2013). Training for the human workforce increases potential productivity and leads to the creation of new jobs as well as the improvement of the quality of products accepted by consumers in the market (Ngure, 2013). In Africa people with disabilities comprise a large part of the potential workforce. However, most African countries deny people with disabilities their inalienable right to employment, a barrier which presents a significant challenge for the development of these countries (Buckup, 2009).

In the last two decades, African nations have become aware of the typical role of TVET to meet the multifaceted economic needs of the people, including employability. As defined by African Union, "TVET delivery systems are well placed to train the skilled and entrepreneurial workforce that Africa needs to create wealth and emerge out of poverty" (African Union, 2007, p. 5). This emerging development in the sector of the TVET program is compatible with the vision of African Union, which is "an integrated, peaceful prosperous Africa driven by its own people to take its rightful place in the global community and the knowledge economy" (African Union, 2007, p. 5). The African Union has recognized TVET in the second decade of education as a means to economic empowerment and self-reliance of youths.

As stated in the Plan of Action on the African Decade of Persons with Disabilities of 2010-2019, persons with disabilities belong to those underserved and overlooked groups who need priority of action/response from their respective governments and societies (African Union Commission Department of Social Affairs, 2010). The strategy of the African Union stresses the need to raise the productive capacity of all people, including vulnerable individuals, in order to lift them from poverty. As the document states, “The key to poverty alleviation is economic growth and the creation of employment for all. However, poor people without employable skills cannot benefit from the growth process. The challenge then is to raise the productive capacity of the poor, the youth and the vulnerable of society through the acquisition of job-specific competencies” (African Union, 2007, p. 18). A more recent document places an equal emphasis on vocational skills development as an important strategy to empower marginalized groups in a society by improving their livelihood while admitting the present deficiencies in this respect (African Union, 2014, p. 24).

The vocational education systems in Africa differ from country to country in their delivery and level of institutions. For instance, in sub-Saharan countries such as Kenya the formal TVET program is school based. In others it follows the colonial model, and students join TVET at the end of primary school (African Union, 2007).

### *1.3 Overview of the Mission and Objectives of Vocational Education Programmes in the Study Countries*

#### *1.3.1 Kenya*

Despite the numerous challenges of the last two decades, the Development and Implementation of the Kenya Education Sector Support Program (2005-2010), the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology Strategic Plan (2008) and the Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (2009) have enabled the country to achieve tremendous progress in the education and training sector in improving “access, equity, quality, relevance and sector management” (Godia, 2012, p. 4). The 2010 constitution of Kenya, article 10 section (2) (b) (c) and (d) set out the values that in the education and training sector the government should ensure the full participation of people, along with “equity, social justice, inclusiveness, equality, human rights, non-discrimination and the protection of marginalised groups, good governance, integrity, transparency and accountability and sustainable development” (Republic of Kenya, 2010, p. 15). Kenya enacted a TVET Act “which will conceive the Kenya TVET Authority by 2015” (African Union, 2014, p. 24). The overall goal of the vocational education policy of the government of Kenya was intended to “provide relevant and adequate skills for industrial and economic development” (Republic of Kenya, Ministry of Education, Higher Education, Science and Technology, 2012, p. 91). The promotion of inclusion of persons with disabilities in all sectors of society was one of the strategic thematic areas declared on the Continental Plan of Action for the Decade of Persons with Disabilities of 2010-2019. Under this thematic area, representation, education, livelihood, work, employment and so on were identified as priorities requiring special attention from governments (African Union Commission, Department of Social Affairs, 2010).

#### *1.3.2 Tanzania*

The concerted socioeconomic development effort of the government of Tanzania, guided by the Tanzania Development Vision 2025, recognised quality education and training as key instruments for the country (United Republic of Tanzania Planning Commission, n.d.). For the TVET sector, a five-year programme was developed. The programme focused on four priority areas, including access and equity, quality of outputs, capacity to provide quality TVET, and monitoring and evaluation (United Republic of Tanzania Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2013). The document further noted that the first priority area of the programme facilitates access to vocational education for students from disadvantaged groups. Alongside this TVET development programme, the Vocational Education and Training Authority of Tanzania developed a five-year Corporate Plan 2012/13-2016/17. In accordance with this guiding plan, the authority, as a responsible government agency, adopted a common vision on TVET development, stating that it should “ensure provision of quality VET that leads to generation of competitive labour force and contributes to social economic development” (United Republic of Tanzania Vocational Education and Training Authority, 2012).

## **2. Method**

Three methods of data collection were used: document analysis of educational laws and statutes as they relate to disability issues in vocational training, interviews with key authorities in the field, and focus group discussions with persons working in disabled peoples’ organisations in Kenya and Tanzania. The process of data collection was carried out according to the relevant legal procedures of the study countries by securing research permits from the Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH) of Tanzania and the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) of Kenya.

## 2.1 Data Collection Procedures

### 2.1.1 Document Analysis

Official documents from both countries were selected which focused on education and training policies, implementation/programmatic instruments and legal frameworks related to disability issues. The documents from Kenya referred to were: Persons with Disabilities Act of 2003, Kenya Vision 2030 of 2007, The National Special Needs Education Policy Framework of 2009, The Constitution of Kenya, Laws of Kenya of 2010, A Policy Framework for Education and Training of 2012, and Basic Education Act of 2013. The documents selected from Tanzania included: The National Policy on Disability of 2004, The Persons with Disabilities Act of 2010, The National Strategy on Inclusive Education 2009-2017 of 2010, Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development (TVETDP) 2013/14-2017/18 of 2013, The VETA Corporate Plan of 2012 and The Tanzania Development Vision 2025. These documents were analysed regarding their approach towards addressing the special educational and training needs of students with disabilities.

### 2.1.2 Interviews

Face-to-face interviews were conducted with eight informants from Kenya and seven informants from Tanzania. The participants were selected from education ministries, vocational education and training authorities and institutions—including TVET colleges and technical teachers training colleges—a national council for persons with disabilities, and the parliament of Kenya and Tanzania (see Table 1). The selection of informants was carried out using purposive and snowball sampling (Seidman, 2006) based on the relevance of their experience and current position in the ministries and institutions.

All interviews were held in the offices of the informants as per their choice, and a friendly approach was applied in order to probe the internal feelings and beliefs of the participants. The data were collected from the participants with their formal consent and any information they gave was kept confidential. In order to maintain the consistency and quality of the interview, guidelines were prepared and followed. Each interview lasted an average of one hour, and all interviews were recorded on a digital recorder with the consent of the informants. The interview guideline focused on the main objective of the research designed to assess the status of the inclusiveness of each country's respective education and training policy and legal documents.

### 2.1.3 Focus Group Discussions

The participants of the focus group discussions held separately in Kenya (N = 9) and Tanzania (N = 9) were representatives of disabled peoples' organisations. These organisations were members of national central organisations of the United Disabled Persons of Kenya (UDPK) or the Federation of DPOs of Tanzania. They represented several types of disabilities including visual and hearing impairment, physical disabilities, albinism, autism, and intellectual disabilities. Demographic data on the participants is presented in Table 1. The high profile staff and leadership of these associations were selected based on their seniority and experience in the disability movements underway in the study countries.

A focus group discussion guideline was prepared and used to maintain the consistency of the discussion. The same procedure was used in both countries. Each discussion lasted an average of two-and-a-half hours. All focus group discussions were recorded using a digital recorder. Sign language interpreters and Kiswahili language translators were used to communicate, respectively, with hearing impaired participants and those who could not speak English.

## 2.2 Data Analysis

The document analysis, interview and focus group discussion guidelines were prepared focusing on the relevant thematic issues. The recorded interviews and focus group discussions were transcribed into hard copy of 75 pages. Based on the common pattern of data analysis strategy in qualitative research, three steps were employed: organising/preparing the data for analysis, describing/analysing the data, and interpreting the data (Marczyk et al., 2005).

The views gained from the data were organised and categorised in thematic areas focusing on the inclusivity of the education and training policies of the countries, the role of disabled peoples' organisations in the course of the preparation of the policies, and the practicality of these policies and relevant documents. The next phase of the analysis was to describe and analyse the findings. Finally, the results were interpreted. The findings of all three forms of data collection were combined in order to offer a multifaceted overall picture.

Table 1. Profiles of the participants

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>Focus group discussion (N = 18)</b>	<b>Interviews (N =15)</b>
<b>Country</b>		
Kenya	9	8
Tanzania	9	7
<b>Sex</b>		
Male	12	13
Female	6	2
<b>Age</b>		
18-30	4	-
31-45	11	5
46+	3	10
<b>Qualifications</b>		
Certificate	3	-
Diploma	4	1
Degree	10	2
MA	1	8
PhD/PhD students	-	4
<b>Position</b>		
Managers	3	1
Experts	-	5
Lecturer/Trainer	-	4
Parliamentarian	-	1
High Government Profile	-	3
Members of DPO Governance	11	1
Parents of CWDs	4	-
<b>Work experience in years</b>		
1-15	8	5
16-30	8	6
31+	2	4
<b>Types of impairment</b>		
Visual impairment	1	5
Hearing impairment	3	-
Physical impairment	5	-
Albinism	3	1
Others	1	-
Non-disabled	5	9

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1 Document Analysis

##### 3.1.1 Kenya

Article 54 of the constitution of Kenya outlaws discrimination on the basis of disability and provides specific articles in the Bill of Rights for Persons with Disabilities in terms of the provision of facilities, adaptive equipment and tools to address the educational and other special needs of persons with disabilities (Republic of Kenya, 2010). These include the use of sign language, braille or other appropriate means of communication, and access to assistive devices to overcome constraints arising from their impairments. Article 260 of the constitution defines the term disability, which had never happened before in the country's national law.

The 2003 Persons with Disability Act of Kenya laid the foundation for the realisation of the basic rights of persons with disabilities in the country. Article 18(1) of the Act enshrined that "no person or learning institution shall deny admission to a person with a disability to any course of study by reason only of such disability" (Republic of Kenya, 2003, p. 13). The Ministry of Education is implementing the National Special Needs Education Policy Framework (2009) targeting learners with physical, visual, hearing, speech and other impairments. This policy framework states that the Ministry of Education "shall recognise and reinforce inclusive education as one of the means for children with special needs to access education" (Republic of Kenya: Ministry of Education of Kenya, Science and Technology, 2012). Finally, the 2013 Basic Education Act of Kenya mainstreamed Articles that address the special educational needs of students with disabilities, including the availability of accessible infrastructure and relevant facilities (Republic of Kenya, 2013).

Moreover, the promotion of the participation of students with disabilities in general and vocational education programmes is included in the Vision 2030 document to which Kenya is committed (Republic of Kenya Vision 2030, 2007).

##### 3.1.2 Tanzania

The National Policy on Disability was the earliest policy document that initiated disability-specific policy statements. This policy document declared the following: "The government in collaboration with stakeholders shall provide a conducive environment for inclusive education that takes care of special needs of disabled children" (United Republic of Tanzania, 2004, p. 16). The document further states: "The government in collaboration with stakeholders shall improve skills training and facilities for people with disabilities and skills training for people with disabilities will integrate the non-disabled trainees".

The principles and practices of inclusive education are also addressed in the National Strategy on Inclusive Education 2009-2017. The overall goal of this strategic document is that "all children, youth and adults in Tanzania have equitable access to quality education in inclusive settings" (United Republic of Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, 2013, p. 17). In accordance with Article 27(1) of the Disability Act of 2010, the government is committed to ensuring the educational and training needs of persons with disabilities throughout the regular education and vocational training system on an equal basis with others (United Republic of Tanzania National Assembly, 2010).

The Vocational Education and Training Authority of Tanzania, which is mandated to regulate the vocational education programme of the country, is authorised to develop strategies for mainstreaming cross-cutting issues such as gender and people with disabilities (Vocational Education and Training Authority, 2012). Based on the core strategic context of Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development Program (2013/14-2017/18), access and equity which have particular relevance to people with disabilities are recognised in the country's TVET programme as one of the priority areas (Ministry of Education and Vocational Education of United Republic of Tanzania, 2013).

#### 3.2 Focus Group Discussions and Interviews

##### 3.2.1 Awareness of Some Inclusive Policy Issues

The interviewees and the participants of the focus group discussions of Kenya and Tanzania unanimously substantiated that they were aware of the inclusion of the special educational and training needs of students with disabilities in policy, legal and implementation instruments. The majority of the participants, however, specified that the specific needs of some impairments requiring special attention were not properly addressed in the documents. For example, the participants of the focus group discussion in Tanzania stated that the special needs of students with albinism, such as light protection devices for their eyes and lotion for their skin, was not taken into account and adequately included in the education and training policy statements. As a result, the specific

needs of learners with albinism were not known to the majority of implementers of the policy. One participant from Kenya also argued that physical and psychosocial rehabilitation for autism and other severe impairments was not adequately included in the policy statements. The participants generally wanted more specific treatment of the needs of various disability groups in the documents and wished for more detailed sections on inclusive education and training. As one of the interviewees put it, “there is a room for being adequate”.

Another interviewee from Tanzania argued differently, stating that as it is in other parts of the world, in Tanzania education and training were addressed as basic human rights as early as in the 1995 education and training policy of the country. As a result, the first Education Act of Tanzania of 2008 declared that every citizen has the right to access education. But these policy documents did not consider the special needs of learners with disabilities. He further added that the 2004 National Disability Policy of Tanzania included some phrases and statements calling upon the education system to respect the special needs of learners with disabilities at all levels, with an emphasis on the availability of adaptive learning materials, assistive devices and professionals trained in special needs education.

One interviewee from Tanzania stated that the endorsement of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities paved the way for the development of the National Inclusive Education Strategy, but he added that there was no implementation mechanism. According to him, the government injected money for the implementation of inclusive education, but the allocated budget was not properly used to the extent of the existing needs. In addition, most teacher training colleges were not organized to train teachers in special needs education for inclusion.

### 3.2.2 The Role of DPOs and Policy Makers

The study participants from Kenya unanimously acknowledged that DPOs were facilitated to participate in the preparation of the education and training policy. However, among the eight interviewees, two high-profile government informants presented some critique. They said that the role and participation of DPOs was too limited to be able to enrich the policy documents appropriately. One of them described the relationship of DPOs and government as follows:

DPOs are usually activists in which their relation with the government might be sour. As a result, even though the situation has been changed after the foundation of the National Council for Persons with Disabilities, I believe that DPOs were not properly involved in the process of the preparation of the education and training policy of the country.

One interviewee argued that both DPOs and individual experts with disabilities were involved in the preparation of the constitution of Kenya of 2010. Persons with disabilities were consulted on contentious issues such as sign language.

All participants from Tanzania confirmed that there has been significant involvement of DPOs since 2004, when the National Policy on Disability was developed. It was from that policy onwards that the issue of inclusive education was raised. DPOs were also invited to offer their perspective when the National Strategy on Inclusive Education was being developed in 2009. However, the participants of the focus group discussion stated that the extent of the participation of DPOs was not as large as they expected. DPOs were often involved in the early stage of the preparation of policy and legal frameworks, but not later. The participants of the focus group discussion also experienced that in the final document most of the issues identified by DPOs were removed. One of the participants from the focus group noted that, in Tanzania, “DPOs were given the opportunity to be involved in the process of the preparation of the first draft of such policy and legal documents. But this kind of involvement of DPOs was nominal.”

Most of the participants argued that policymakers cannot be fully aware of all fields and issues in society, such as disabilities. In a democratic society, policymakers should therefore facilitate the involvement and contribution of all citizens. Two interviewees working in the education ministries as experts, one from Tanzania and the other from Kenya, saw that DPOs were in a good position to advocate for the issue of disability and to influence policymakers because the constitution of these countries already included the issue of disability.

### 3.2.3 Roots of Disability Policy

Whether the inclusion of disability issues in education and vocational training policy was a home grown initiative was an issue of debate among the study participants. One of the interviewees from Kenya explained that after European colonisation it was difficult to distinguish what is a home grown initiative and what is a foreign one. Most of the study participants believed that the policies of the study countries could have been influenced by relevant international philosophy and trends, with one interviewee from Kenya stating: “I

objectively believe that these policy documents might have been influenced by internationally recognised initiatives due to the fact that the world became a global village". He further justified his opinion that "learning is two ways, we could pick up practices from any other country, but it must be customised and suitable to the local context". An interviewee from Tanzania argued that persons with disabilities have engaged in a long and persistent struggle for the inclusion of disability issues in policy and legal frameworks. As an integral part of the international disability movement, the pressure of DPOs in Tanzania played a leading role as a home grown initiative in ensuring that the issue of disability is mainstreamed in relevant policy and legal instruments.

#### 3.2.4 Challenges and Opportunities

Study participants were asked to identify the major challenges and opportunities as well as the way forward for the participation of persons with disabilities in vocational education. The participants agreed that the participation of students with disabilities in formal vocational education was insignificant. One Tanzanian interviewee pointed out that some efforts were made to facilitate the participation of students with disabilities in non-formal vocational training. However, no concrete progress has been made regarding the participation of students with disabilities in formal vocational education.

Most of the respondents identified the following factors as adversely affecting the participation of students with disabilities in formal vocational education:

- 1) The negative attitude of society and of the parents of children with disabilities in particular towards the potential and capacity of students with disabilities.
- 2) Lack of adapted and modified curriculum responsive to the special educational and training needs of students with disabilities.
- 3) Lack of specialised and adaptive equipment and technologies.
- 4) Lack of clear guidelines on the provision of adaptive skills and equipment such as sign language interpretation and assistive devices.
- 5) Lack of funding allocated for the promotion of inclusive education and training regardless of the availability of disability support allowance in Kenya.
- 6) Inaccessibility of the physical environment and accommodation services of vocational education centres and institutions.
- 7) Lack of proper integration of trainees with disabilities in the regular training system.
- 8) Lack of adequate technocrats trained in special needs education.

Regardless of these multifaceted challenges, most of the study participants recognised the following circumstances as opportunities for the enhancement of the participation of students with disabilities in regular vocational education programmes of the study countries:

- 1) The formulation of disability-mainstreamed and disability-specific policy, legal and implementation instruments.
- 2) The commencement and emergence of system change moving towards inclusive education and training.
- 3) The availability of political goodwill in the governments of the study countries.

Considering these challenges and opportunities, a majority of the study participants made the following recommendations on how to proceed with enhancing the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education:

- 1) Adapt and modify curriculum according to the special educational training needs of students with disabilities.
- 2) Mainstream special needs education as a common course in the curriculum of training programmes for trainers.
- 3) Carry out research on the issue of disability and vocational education.
- 4) Allocate adequate resources, paying proper attention to the special educational and training needs of students with disabilities.
- 5) Enhance the availability of specialised facilities, equipment, technology and assistive devices.
- 6) Make special funding available for alumni to be engaged in self-employment or income-generating activities through establishing their own enterprises upon the completion of their training.



7) Conduct policy review and amend the national policy and legal documents with the objective of being more inclusive regarding the special educational and training needs and rights of people with disabilities.

8) Sensitise practitioners and communities regarding the basic as well as specific needs and rights of people with disabilities.

#### 4. Discussion

This study investigated the status of inclusiveness in vocational education and training policies and practices in two African countries, Tanzania and Kenya, with a focus on the special educational and training needs of people with disabilities. Documentary analyses of relevant legislation and implementation instruments in both countries were supplemented by focus group discussions and interviews with key persons. Content analysis and thematic coding were used to analyse the material. The results showed that regardless of the prevailing drawbacks and limitations, some efforts were made in both Kenya and Tanzania to mainstream the special educational and training needs of persons with disabilities in relevant policy and legal instruments. However, the focus group participants representing, in particular, various Disabled Persons Organisations (DPOs) argued that the rehabilitation and specific needs of students with disabilities were not being properly addressed. In this case, the situation of Ethiopia is different than that of Kenya and Tanzania, where the special educational and training needs of people with disabilities was not properly and adequately addressed in the national education and training policy of the country (Malle, Pirttimaa, & Saloviita, 2015b). On the basis of this lack, it can be inferred that in these countries policy revision is needed in order to make the statements compatible with the internationally accepted principles of special needs education.

The Continental Plan of Action for the Decade of Persons with Disabilities of 2010-2019 states that environment plays a significant role in facilitating and restricting the participation of persons with disabilities at the family, community and national levels. The widespread environmental barriers reported in this document include inadequate policies and standards, negative attitudes, lack of services, problems of service delivery, inadequate funding, lack of accessibility, lack of consultation and involvement, and lack of data and evidence (African Union Commission Department of Social Affairs, 2010). This document further states that member countries of the African Union are required to promote vocational education opportunity for people with disabilities, with a particular emphasis on marketable skills, by ratifying and implementing the ILO Convention No.159 concerning vocational rehabilitation and employment of persons with disabilities to ensure their entry into the labour market.

Regardless of the fact that the entire initiatives proposed by DPOs were not incorporated, most of the study participants from Kenya and Tanzania confirmed that DPOs were encouraged and invited to be involved in the process of preparing relevant education and training policy and legal frameworks. However, in the context of Ethiopia (Malle et al., 2015b), the participants reported that DPOs were not invited to take part in such consultative workshops and meetings. In addition, the high-profile interviewees also agreed that DPOs were not given the opportunity to participate in the process of preparing the policy. However, UN member countries are presently encouraged and required to enhance the role and participation of people with disabilities through DPOs as well as families, and to use their initiatives as valuable input for the development of disability-mainstreamed policy and legal instruments and standards (ILO, UNESCO, & WHO, 2004).

The question of whether the inclusion of the special educational and training needs of people with disabilities was a home grown initiative or not remained debatable. Most of the participants from Kenya and Tanzania concurred that the policy development processes might have been influenced by internationally recognised philosophies and trends. In Ethiopia, the participants in the focus group discussions agreed that “the presence of the issue of disability in the 1994 Education and Training Policy was more or less the result of a donor-driven initiative” (Malle et al., 2015b). They stressed further that “if it had been a home-grown initiative, the country could have achieved more tangible change and progress in providing accessible educational and vocational training opportunities and facilities to persons with disabilities”.

The results confirmed that the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education programmes in Kenya and Tanzania was insignificant due to their limited access to the services of TVET colleges. Similarly, attitudinal, environmental and institutional barriers were identified as predominant causes for the limited participation of people with disabilities in vocational education programme of Ethiopia (Malle, Pirttimaa, & Saloviita, 2015a). It was argued that this affected the economy of the study countries in general and the lives of people with disabilities in particular. In line with the assessment conducted by ILO on the economic consequences of the exclusion of persons with disabilities, the GDP of Ethiopia and Tanzania lose 5.1 and 3.76 percent in each fiscal year respectively (Buckup, 2009).

To sum up, a number of challenges that restricted the participation of students with disabilities in vocational education programmes of the study countries were identified by the respondents. The problems revolved around the non-availability of accessible service delivery and facilities as well as the inaccessibility of the physical environment in TVET institutions. In this respect, the Kenyan Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology (2012, p. 37) identified the main challenges that adversely affected the full and effective participation of students with disabilities in education and training, including “cultural prejudice and negative attitude, the slow implementation of guidelines on special needs education policy and inclusive education, inadequate data on the number of children with special needs, inadequate tools and skills for assessing and identifying learners with special needs, inadequate funding, inadequate facilities and teachers”.

In this study, we found that the relevant policy, legal and implementation frameworks of the study countries regarding the special educational and training needs of persons with disabilities did identify the major obstacles hampering participation in vocational education programmes. However, regardless of the political goodwill observed on the part of the governments of the study countries, including Ethiopia, the commitment to the implementation of those disability-mainstreamed policy and legal instruments remains limited. This limitation continues to adversely affect the educational and training rights of persons with disabilities as well as their full and effective participation in the regular vocational education systems.

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