

## **Inclusive education practices in TVET institutions in Botswana, South Africa and Thailand: A systematic review**

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### **Abstract**

This study collects data on inclusive education practices within Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions across Botswana, South Africa, and Thailand. Utilising a systematic review methodology, the research examines international policies, government reports, and peer-reviewed journal articles relevant to inclusive education in the TVET sector. The objective is to present an overview of current practices, policies, and guidelines, assess the provision of inclusive facilities and amenities in these institutions, and identify the challenges encountered. Despite inclusive education policies in the three countries, the TVET sector continues to inadequately address the diverse inclusive needs of students and other stakeholders. TVET facilities in these nations remain systemically segregated, thereby excluding individuals with special needs. The literature indicates that effective inclusive practices depend more on the institutional implementation of inclusive processes than students' abilities. The findings reveal gaps in both policy and practice, highlighting that many TVET teachers lack training in inclusive education pedagogies. Furthermore, there are inadequate funding mechanisms to modernise existing infrastructure, acquire specialised equipment for laboratory work, and support inclusive pedagogies and assessments. Leaders within TVET institutions must recognise the exclusionary barriers faced by individuals and develop solutions to overcome these obstacles.

***Keywords:** Disability, inclusive education, inclusive practices, special education, Botswana, South Africa, Thailand*

### **1 Background and Introduction**

Inclusive education practice defines the extent and techniques whereby normal school systems attempt to provide education to differently-abled children in a natural classroom setting (UNESCO 2012). Furthermore, UNESCO (2020) extended the understanding of inclusive education practices to include all actions taken to address all forms of exclusion and marginalisation, disparities, and inequalities that undermine access and participation in learning outcomes. Sharma (2015) asserts that inclusive education promotes equitable access to the same education standards for children from different socio-economic backgrounds to reach their full potential despite all other variables. TVET is frequently viewed as an inclusive educational route for students excluded from mainstream upper-secondary education (Jayaram et al. 2017). However, Maggiolini and Molteni (2013) argue that inclusive practices remain a major challenge for several institutions of higher learning.

According to Alla-Mensah et al. (2021), TVET can also perpetuate the exclusion of marginalised groups due to its curricular designs and limited capacities to accommodate students' diverse and often complex needs. Implementing measures to integrate individuals with disabilities into the TVET system is crucial, and each country should consider achieving an inclusive TVET system (International Labour Office, Gender, Equality and Diversity 2013). Critically comparing international trends is an essential standard practice in inclusive education practices in TVET to adopt best practices (DHET 2018; Schröder & Dehnbostel 2017). Hence, this paper systematically reviewed published literature on the inclusive education practices in TVET institutions in Botswana, South Africa and Thailand against international standards of inclusive practices espoused by UNESCO.

Generally, UNESCO (2012) outlined some fundamental inclusive education practices that include:

- coming up with legal frameworks and normative instruments to promote inclusion in education systems,
- enforcing international obligations to the right to education for all people,
- increased advocacy for inclusive practices in educational institutions,
- addressing all forms of inequalities and exclusion in education systems,
- adopting inclusive pedagogical methodologies in teaching, learning, and assessment,
- ensuring that all infrastructure and the learning environment are appropriate, accessible, and inclusive to all people even those with disabilities.

Guaranteeing appropriate inclusive educational opportunities for learners with disabilities and the socially excluded remains a significant challenge that TVET learning institutions face. Generally, there is limited literature on inclusive practices in TVET education in particular, as compared to general education, hence the need for this paper. There is a need for TVET inclusive education policies and a strong commitment by all stakeholders to implement such policies. As such, Faas, Smith, and Darmody (2018) assert that implementing inclusive practices in TVET institutions requires capable and compassionate leaders who are committed advocates of inclusivity within educational establishments. Those in leadership are supposed to demonstrate a commitment to creating inclusive school environments that accommodate students from diverse upbringings. Such practices should recognise and acknowledge differences between learners, reflecting variations in the school curriculum and learning materials, and further developing inclusive cultural awareness in teaching personnel and empowering learners (UNESCO 2020). However, the varying inclusive practices in TVET institutions in the three countries have been shaped by cultural and social beliefs, compounded by political and economic interventions. Further challenges of inclusive pedagogical practices have been brought about by the level of responses and adoption of blended teaching and learning methodologies during the COVID-19 era.

While the COVID-19 pandemic presented numerous opportunities for adopting new pedagogical approaches utilising digital technologies and online interactions, the pandemic's effects on inclusive practices for socially marginalised individuals warrant further

investigation (Hondonga et al. 2021). TVET institutions are challenged to offer a great deal of flexibility by investing in specialised infrastructure and qualified personnel to ensure that all exclusionary impediments are removed in the use of blended learning. Institutions also require novel, yet adaptable, inclusive, and sustainable teaching and assessment methods. However, institutions must digitise in a manner that does not compromise the acquisition of the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) skills by TVET learners for them to fit well in modern workplaces (Pirzada & Gulzar 2023).

Helmy and Fairman (2023) highlight the importance of TVET teachers acknowledging and tackling the exclusionary obstacles encountered by students engaging in online learning. All interventions must, however, keep emphasising uncompromised efficient skills development, which can still be realised through using virtual reality and augmented reality in simulated and remote laboratory settings. Therefore, TVET teachers are key to promoting inclusive practices in the institutions by creating an enabling environment to ensure that all learners can access TVET education despite any form of disability (Pirzada et al. 2024). Inclusive practices also embrace gender inclusion to allow males and females to have full access to all forms of education without discrimination (Sharma 2015). Modern TVET training should not make some trades and vocations a preserve for one gender domination to break the stereotypes. In Botswana and South Africa, gender enrolment disparities are still evident across most TVET programmes, and this is rooted in the past and present social beliefs and political influences (Mosalagae 2016; Nkambule & Ngubane 2023).

Even with the current TVET training policies and institutional assistance for students with impairments, each student still needs reasonable accommodation. According to the ILO (2016), reasonable accommodation is the customised modification of the surroundings to satisfy the special requirements of people with disabilities. Therefore, it is crucial to cultivate leadership abilities that allow TVET institutional leaders to efficiently structure their institutions using stakeholders' combined professional expertise, knowledge, and experiences (DiPaola et al. 2004).

## **1.1 Research Objectives**

The primary objectives of this paper are to:

- i. Determine whether policies are in place to facilitate the implementation of inclusive practices in TVET institutions in the three countries.
- ii. Investigate the prevalence of inclusive practices in TVET institutions.
- iii. Identify the challenges faced by the three countries in implementing inclusive practices in TVET institutions and propose recommendations for improvement.

This article aims to promote the improvement of inclusive practices in TVET programme delivery and advance changes that provide all prospective students, including those with disabilities, better access to learning settings and infrastructure. The goal of the comparative analysis between Botswana, South Africa and Thailand is to pinpoint current procedures,

areas for improvement, and best practices that the three nations may adopt. In the end, increased inclusion for people with special needs in TVET professions and improved socio-economic fairness in society would result from emphasising role clarity for all TVET practitioners and leaders about inclusive education methods. Additionally, this would guarantee that students, regardless of their disability, have equitable access to educational resources and services customised to meet their requirements.

The paper's findings and suggestions will help educate policymakers about the issues at hand and offer potential solutions to improve inclusive practices in TVET programmes. This article will enhance the limited research on inclusive practices and the experiences of students with disabilities at TVET institutions in poor nations.

## **1.2 Theoretical framework**

The study was grounded in social model theory, which emerged from disability activists' work during the 1970s and 80s. This model of disability arose as a response to the constraints associated with the medical model of disability (D'Alessio 2011, 44). The social model theory posits that by designing societies and structures accessible for individuals with disabilities, such individuals would not encounter limitations in their participation within the broader community (Retief & Letšosa 2018). Similarly, according to the social model, disability is perceived to stem from societal mental attitudes and physical infrastructures, rather than being solely due to an individual's medical condition (Goering 2015). Instead, it is societal inadequacy to furnish suitable services and adequately address the needs of disabled individuals within societal structures such as TVET institutions (Goering 2015). In the realm of TVET institutions, the social model of disability focuses on establishing inclusive environments that eliminate obstacles to learning and engagement for all students, including the socially marginalised. The model acknowledges that inclusive practices encompass not only physical accessibility but also curriculum flexibility, teaching methods, and support services that accommodate diverse needs (Mosia & Phasha 2017). This systematic review focuses on inclusive policies and systemic challenges that impede the complete integration of students with disabilities in TVET institutions.

## **1.3 Inclusive Education Policies**

According to UNICEF (2023), International Organisations such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations (UN) have a track record of promoting and advocating for all people's right to a decent education. According to ILO (2017), the same fundamental rights to education for all children are inscribed in both the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The need for quality education for all children is consistent with Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.5, which supports equitable access to vocational training for marginalised groups, such as people with disabilities, at all levels of society (UNESCO 2020).

On the other hand, The International Labour Organisation (ILO) policy paper on disability inclusion further weighs in that all people working in TVET institutions must comprehend the practical requirements for effective disability inclusion, considering the diverse types of disabilities and educational backgrounds among individuals (ILO 2012; Matafora 2019). Furthermore, inclusive education plays a pertinent role in advancing SDGs 4 and 8 which pertain to education and employment, respectively (Abbott et al. 2017). Despite the emphasis placed on TVET in national and international policies, there appear to be limited specific strategic initiatives addressing the inclusion of marginalised groups in this sector (African Union 2018).

Research and literature highlight a diverse array of both negative and positive experiences encountered by students and staff with disabilities in post-school education and training (PSET) on a global scale (Mosalagae 2021; Nkambule & Ngubane 2023). International adherence to legislative and policy requirements, coupled with recognition of business cases for addressing disability equity issues, has facilitated progress in numerous countries. Legislation and policies play a pivotal role at the national level in advocating for the rights of individuals with disabilities. Institutions worldwide are striving to transition towards more inclusive policies and practices, moving away from remedial interventions (Vo 2022). Inclusion entails facilitating comprehensive and fair participation in and advancement through the PSET system for all prospective and current students and staff.

Different countries have different approaches and policies to inclusive practices in TVET institutions. In Australia, the Australian Apprenticeships Incentives Programme offers various forms of assistance to support apprentices with disabilities. This includes the Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support, which provides payments to employers and funds for tutorial, interpreter, and mentor services for apprentices (ILO 2011). In Malaysia, the OKU Talent Enhancement Programme (OTEP Scheme) under the National Human Resource Development Fund allows employers full financial assistance to send employees with disabilities to designated training programmes. In India, the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, Art 19, outlines guidelines on providing loans to support people with disabilities in TVET in formal and informal training institutions. In Sri Lanka, the Employers' Network on Disability, established in 2000 by the Employers' Federation of Ceylon (EFC), seeks to enhance training and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in the Sri Lankan business sector (ILO 2011). However, other countries offer targeted admissions and training opportunities in TVET institutions to individuals with disabilities and those with special needs.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) and the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities do not provide a specific definition of disability. Instead, they acknowledge disability as a dynamic concept shaped by societal factors, particularly when individuals with disabilities are prevented from fully participating in all aspects of life and when society does not adequately uphold their rights and address their needs. Other related definitions of disability share certain common elements even if they emphasise or word them differently like:

- the presence of impairment,
- internal and external limitations or barriers which hinder full and equal participation,
- focus on the abilities of the person with a disability,
- loss or lack of access to opportunities owing to environmental barriers and/or negative perceptions and attitudes of society.

In countries like South Africa, Botswana, and Bangladesh, quotas or equity targets are in place to create opportunities for learners with disabilities to enrol in TVET institutions. For instance, in Bangladesh, the Department of Technical Education (DTE) initiated a pilot project to implement the recommendations of the National Strategy for mainstreaming disability TVET institutes (Aziz 2023; ILO 2016). This project included a five percent admission quota for individuals with disabilities and incorporated disability inclusion in the annual plan, budget, and procurement process. Additionally, it integrated disability considerations into the performance appraisal and monitoring system (Aziz 2023). Botswana public institutions' admissions policies also have a reservation of 5% for the special educational needs (SEN) and, orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in their programmes (Mosalagae 2016; Mosalagae & Bekker 2021). Arguments are that the quota and equity targets avoid unnecessary competition and bias for enrolments in TVET institutions that may be tilted towards people without disability.

## 2 Methodology

To ensure transparency in the research process, we used the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews. A systematic PRISMA criterion was used to include and exclude relevant literature for the study since it provides a structured approach to conducting systematic reviews (Moher et al. 2009).

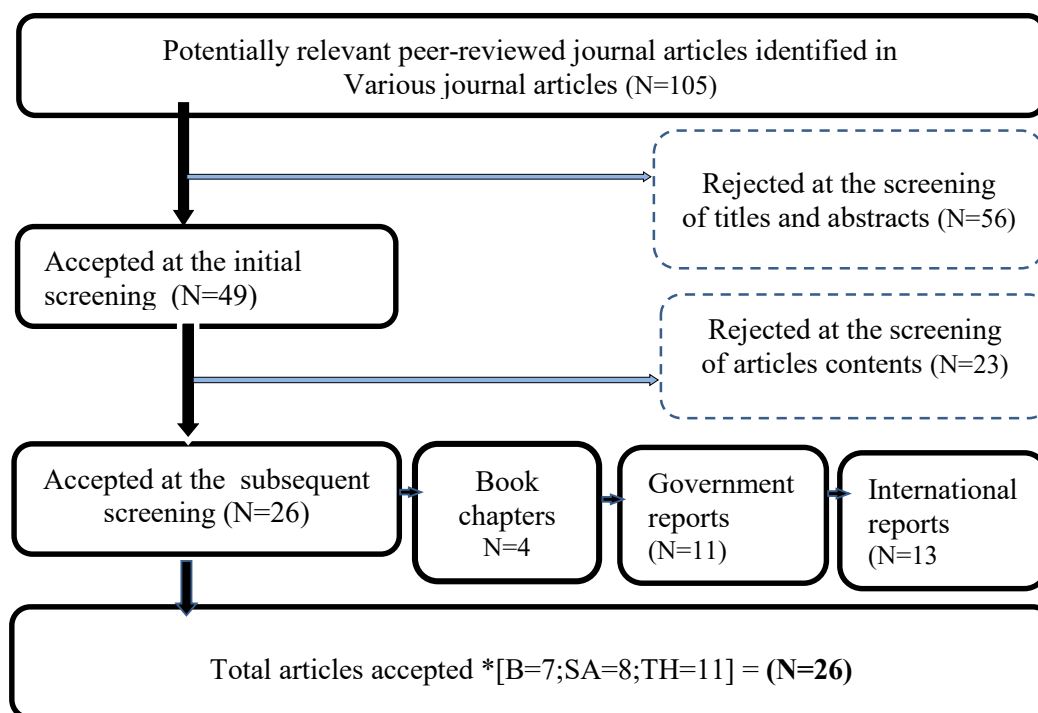
We examined databases known for granting access to interdisciplinary research studies, such as ERIC, PsycINFO, PubMed, and others, to do an exhaustive search for pertinent literature on inclusive education methods at TVET institutions in Botswana, South Africa, and Thailand. The main objectives of this study were considered when formulating the search terms. The search was limited to papers published within the last 20 years to guarantee relevance to modern inclusive education approaches. Only studies published in English were included. The search strings used are:

- (“inclusive education” OR ‘inclusive practices’) AND (“TVET” OR “Technical and Vocational Education and Training” AND “Botswana”,
- ("inclusive curriculum" OR "accessibility" OR "accommodations") AND ("vocational schools" OR "technical colleges") AND "South Africa",
- ("disability inclusion" OR "special educational needs") AND ("vocational education" OR "skills training") AND "Thailand".

We used the same strings, only changing the country name to refine our search for a particular country. These search strings combine terms related to inclusive education,

disability, and specific country names to retrieve relevant literature from academic databases and journals.

The study design included peer-reviewed journal articles, policy documents, and reports from reputable authoritative organisations such as the African Union, International Labour Organisation (ILO), OECD and UNESCO. We also considered studies conducted in or specifically addressing inclusive practices in TVET institutions in Botswana, South Africa or Thailand. The review included learners with diverse needs, such as those with disabilities and special needs within TVET settings. The studies were supposed to examine inclusive practices, policies, interventions and challenges in TVET institutions. Non-peer-reviewed literature such as editorials, conference abstracts and dissertations were excluded. Studies conducted outside Botswana, South Africa, or Thailand that were not relevant to the inclusive practices in these countries were excluded. We also excluded studies focusing exclusively on general education settings or other educational levels beyond TVET institutions. Both authors extracted data for Thailand, while the first author completed South Africa and the second author did Botswana. The authors consulted and checked the results periodically and independently to avoid bias. Figure 1 illustrates the flowchart of the article selection process.



\*B=Botswana, SA=South Africa, TH=Thailand

Figure 1: Article Selection Process Flowchart

## 3 Findings

### 3.1 Inclusive Education Policies in Botswana

The Botswana government has demonstrated its commitment to providing inclusive education, including TVET, to learners with disabilities by signing various international agreements. For example, Botswana endorsed the Jomtien Declaration (UNESCO 1990) and signed the Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO 2000) to promise to provide education to all citizens, particularly the most vulnerable and underprivileged. This commitment is further reflected in a revised Act of 2024 on Persons with Disabilities (Government of Botswana 2024). The act, amongst other tasks, mandates the establishment of the Disability Coordination Office and the National Disability Council to promote equal access to facilities and education for all people in Botswana. While the initial education policy of Botswana in 1977 did not explicitly address special needs or TVET, it established the principle of Kagisano to govern all educational advancements. Kagisano emphasised the promotion of social harmony through democratic principles and the concept of “botho”, which embodies interdependence and humanity among individuals (Government of Botswana 1977). The Revised National Policy for Education (RNPE) of 1994 came up with clear recognition and major policy guidelines for providing quality and equitable education to all children at all levels, especially the most vulnerable and disadvantaged (Government of Botswana 1994). Two significant recommendations outlined in the policy were the assignment of a senior teacher in each school to oversee the education of handicapped children and the incorporation of special needs education components into the pre-service or in-service training of all teachers (ibid). Other refinements and improvements to the commitments are implemented through the National Development Plan (NDP).

Specifically to TVET, The National Policy on Vocational Education and Training (Government of Botswana 1997) acknowledged that disadvantaged groups, such as disabled students and women, should be given special attention and that special training programmes may be required. More focus was placed on the recognition of special educational needs (SEN) and orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) in institutional enrolment strategies to improve access and equity to TVET training in several institutions in the country (Dart 2007). A comprehensive policy regarding inclusive education was enacted in 2013, and there was a gradual growth of enrolled students in general education. However, the exact statistics could not be ascertained due to inaccuracies with them (Mangope & Mukhopadhyay 2015). Further gaps in the number of SEN/OVC students enrolled in TVET programmes started to grow and were compounded by a negligible number of studies on inclusivity in TVET programmes in Botswana.

#### 3.1.1 *Achievements and Challenges*

The positive policy shifts in Botswana towards implementing international agreements on improved access to quality education and training are well documented. Although the number of SEN/OVC learners has increased in general education, the number of the same category of



learners enrolled in TVET programmes and institutions has remained generally low (Mangope & Mukhopadhyay 2015).

Despite the government's good policies and goodwill, meeting the requirements of inclusive practices in TVET institutions in Botswana has been a daunting task. Molosiwa and Mpofo (2017) found that several students face exclusionary practices rather than inclusion. For example, deficiencies persist in enrolment processes, teaching and learning, and the provision of inclusive infrastructure in school settings (Mosalagae & Bekker 2021). Different approaches have been pursued, creating a dilemma regarding the best way forward. On the one hand, some TVET colleges have isolated students with disabilities from their "normal" counterparts. The argument for this is to allow the directed provision of resources and infrastructure to satisfy the educational demands of those learners (Mangope & Mukhopadhyay 2015). This approach is, however, criticized in that learners with disabilities are stigmatised and marginalised with connotations of epistemological exclusion (Norwich 2010; Norwich 2014; Mosalagae & Bekker 2021). Students with disabilities will be perceived to be social misfits who cannot mix with other students and lack social skills, which may affect them later when seeking employment opportunities.

On the other hand, inclusive education theories have influenced a mixed-classes approach for both disabled and non-disabled students. This approach advocates for equal and inclusive treatment of students where none feels different from the other in the general provision of pedagogical resources except for individualised support (Mosalagae & Bekker 2021). This approach allows all students in the institution to socially integrate into the learning, social and general institutional environments and befits the social model of disability (Elliott et al. 2015, 2). Whilst all approaches are pursued, challenges remain in providing inclusive practices, especially in TVET institutions requiring specialised equipment (Svendby 2020). The majority of TVET teachers are unaware of students' disabilities and the use of inclusive pedagogies in their teaching. This lack of understanding means students may not receive adequate support to achieve their full academic potential. At the most, it implies that students with disabilities may be denied full participation in the learning process (ibid). However, Mosalagae (2021) agrees that there is little published material on inclusive practices in Botswana's TVET institutions and the true voices and experiences of learners with disabilities in such institutions.

Mosalagae and Bekker (2021) conducted a study on inclusion in TVET colleges in Botswana. Findings suggested that students had a positive perception of good inclusionary practices both in class and college environments. The study further indicated that learners felt that they benefitted from socially inclusive mixed classes and collaborative teaching practices between their teachers and special educators. Some of the inclusive practices pointed out include pedagogical and social inclusion, the creation of clear, sustainable learning opportunities for all, empowerment, forming teamwork, forming friendships, the provision of adequate and suitable resources, and appropriate inclusive infrastructure and learning environments.

### 3.2 Inclusive Education Policies in South Africa

Presently, the oversight of fifty public TVET colleges in South Africa falls under the responsibility of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). With an inclusive educational approach, the South African school system aims to include all students, especially those with impairments. The implementation of disability rights in South Africa must be contextualised within its distinct political, social and legislative framework. Several TVET colleges enrol a diverse range of students for certification programs, some of whom have learning disabilities that are disruptive in the classroom. There have been no notable advancements in implementing inclusive education policy since the formal publication of "Education White Paper 6" (DoE 2001; Walton 2011; Chataika et al. 2012). The White Paper 6 (2001) emphasised the government's disapproval of the exclusion of disabled individuals from mainstream society and pursues to address this by including disabled learners with able-bodied peers with the required support, in addition to facilitating a deeper comprehension of contextual challenges to aid in the identification of suitable solutions and community engagement.

The DHET in South Africa has been dedicated to establishing an inclusive PSET sector, particularly emphasising inclusive education in TVET colleges (Kungwane & Korf-Taljaard 2023). In its advocacy for assistance to students with disabilities within the higher education system, the Education White Paper on Post-School Education (DHET 2013) notably emphasises the creation of an inclusive higher education milieu (DHET 2013). Acknowledging the persistent challenges of bias and obstacles in accessing curricula, student financing, and support services encountered by students with disabilities, the document identifies deficiencies in implementing inclusive policies (DHET 2013; Alinea 2022).

By integrating individuals with impairments into regular programs, the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) has significantly improved the educational and training options for impaired individuals. Despite significant progress, the PSET system's handling of disability rights is still disjointed and disconnected from the institutional change and diversity initiatives now in place. The Strategic Policy Framework on Disability for the Post-School Education and Training System is essential for directing enhancements in the accessibility to and achievement within post-school education and training, encompassing private institutions, for individuals with disabilities (Chiwandire 2019; DHET 2018). The Strategic Policy Framework on Disability delineates comprehensive guidelines encompassing all institutions and programmes within the PSET system, including the DHET and its regional offices, public and private educational institutions such as universities, TVET and CET colleges, and skills providers, agencies, and other entities.

To ensure change that benefits South Africans with disabilities and other marginalised groups, the White Paper on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities lays out the strategic approach and anchors for realising the rights of individuals with disabilities (DoSD 2015; Nkambule & Ngubane 2023). As a policy, it establishes guidelines for what constitutes

acceptable behaviour and encourages the creation of inclusive environments that offer individuals with disabilities the same benefits and opportunities as others.

The objective of the social model of disability is to ensure equitable participation of individuals with impairments across all facets of society. The model serves as the cornerstone for the options available to students with disabilities to assist them in overcoming the challenges that exist on TVET campuses. Because the majority of South African educational institutions were not intentionally constructed with accessibility for students with impairments in mind, there are inherent hurdles (Tugli et al. 2017). In addition, students with disabilities must consider how their limitations will affect their ability to participate in educational programmes with reasonable accommodation.

Utilising a qualitative critical discourse analysis methodology to scrutinise the policy text concerning the funding of individuals with learning disabilities within the National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS), Nkambule and Ngubane (2023) shed light on the challenges faced by students with learning disabilities. Their investigation underscores the necessity for a funding policy that recognises the diverse nature of disability. Despite the provisions within the Norms and Standards for Funding TVET colleges that allow for supplementary funding for students with disabilities (DHET 2018), there remains a lack of dedicated funding to enhance the accessibility of buildings at TVET colleges.

Delubom, Marongwe, and Buka (2020) investigated the obstacles encountered by the management of TVET colleges in implementing inclusive education, particularly concerning students with disabilities. The study revealed persistent barriers to accessibility and support for students with disabilities within TVET colleges. The research also identified various challenges faced by the college management, including insufficient infrastructure, funding constraints, inadequate lecturer training, and a shortage of staff to assist students with disabilities (Walton 2011). As a solution, it was suggested that TVET colleges establish Disability Service Units and either hire trained lecturers or provide training for existing lecturers to better support disabled students in their learning process. Munyaradzi, Arko-Achemfuor, and Quan-Baffour (2023) echoed these findings, affirming that students with disabilities encounter difficulties that disrupt their academic progression. Additionally, they observed that the existing student support mechanisms within the TVET sector inadequately address the diverse needs of students with disabilities.

According to Munyaradzi et al. (2023), the fundamental tenets of inclusive education in South Africa include respect for uniqueness and diversity in culture and democratic values like equality and human rights. Scholarly research suggests that several social developments, such as modifications to educational policy and contextual dynamics, have impeded the progress of inclusive education. This is particularly evident in how TVET colleges handle diversity (Kungwane & Korf-Taljaard 2023; Walton 2011). As a result, suggestions have been made to create Disability Service Units and collaborate with businesses to improve inclusion.

### 3.3 Inclusive Education Policies in Thailand

In Thailand, inclusive education takes the form of full-time combined study, which is comparable to the mainstream setup. Students with disabilities are mentioned in several significant Thai government education papers. The majority of the documents, however, do not specify the location of specialised schools for children with impairments. According to Vibulpatanavong (2017), most public institutions in Thailand that admit students with disabilities are referred to as integration schools rather than inclusive schools. How integration schools serve students with disabilities differs.

People with disabilities in Thailand are entitled to education as specified in the national education legislation or national education plan, which suits their physical and mental condition in specialised educational institutions, general education institutions, alternative education, or non-formal education, according to the Persons with Disabilities Empowerment Act, B.E. 2550 (Thai Government 2007). The agencies above are responsible for furnishing disabled individuals with appropriate and essential facilities, media, services, and other educational aids (Janyam 2022). The statute protects the educational rights of people with impairments. Nonetheless, special education or general education institutions may instruct those with disabilities. Two types of education streams are available to people with disabilities: formal and non-formal. The Education for Persons with Disabilities Act, B.E. 2551, was approved by the Thai Government in 2008. According to the statute, people with disabilities are entitled to the following kinds of education:

- Provision of free education, including educational technologies, accommodations, media, services, and support from birth or the onset of a disability.
- The abilities, interests, and needs of the disabled individual should be considered when selecting educational services, institutions, systems, and types.
- Delivery of quality education that meets high-quality assurance standards, with curriculum, instruction, and assessment tailored to individual needs.

The Education for Persons with Disabilities Act does not prioritise mainstream education over special education for individuals with disabilities. However, the statute affirms, for the first time, the right of individuals with disabilities to choose their educational providers or systems. This provision represents a significant advancement, empowering people with disabilities to determine the type of education they wish to pursue (Kusuma 2021).

In 2017, the Thai government introduced the National Education Plan for 2017–2036 (Thai Ministry of Education 2017). This plan includes the implementation of an inclusive education policy. However, as Vibulpatanavong (2017) notes, the plan lacks enforceability. Despite this, it sets forth objectives to improve education for individuals with disabilities. The plan asserts that children with disabilities, if able, have the right to be educated alongside their peers in regular classes. This suggests that some students with disabilities may not be able to attend classes with regular students.

Although the laws and policies in Thailand reflect that the Thai government is committed to improving education for persons with disabilities, much further progress is needed (Vibulpatanavong 2017). For example, despite the law providing free education for persons with disabilities at all educational levels, including the tertiary level, the full implementation of the envisaged prospects has not been realised.

The Ministry of Education states that there are nine different categories of disabilities in Thailand: autism, learning disabilities, language and communication disorders, behavioural disorders, physical disabilities and health impairments, intellectual disabilities, hearing impairments, visual impairments, and multiple disabilities (Hill & Sukbunpant 2013). The Education for Persons with Disabilities Act protects those with one of the nine disability categories. However, classification can also result in stereotyping and labelling. Therefore, even though classification could be a technique that many teachers are unfamiliar with, it is crucial to try to eliminate categorisation and support all children who need protection without categorisation (Jayaram 2017; UNESCO 2009).

According to Kosuwan, Viriyangkura, and Swerdlik (2014), there are instances in which disabled students in Thailand's conventional classrooms may reflect physical inclusion and not an education that is suitable for them. Furthermore, it is rare in Thailand for conventional classrooms and TVET institutions to accommodate students with special needs through adaptations and adjustments (Kosuwan et al. 2014). Providing curricular and instructional modification training to teachers could improve the inclusion of all students in regular classes.

The Thai Ministry of Labour has been offering training classes to underprivileged students as part of a special plan since 2020 to assist students who might have trouble paying for their tuition. The Equitable Education Fund (EEF), created by the Equitable Education Act of 2018, provides grants to underprivileged students, including those with disabilities, so they can enrol in TVET programmes, assisting vocational institutions in raising the quality of their offerings. However, there is unease that certain underprivileged students, especially those pursuing postsecondary TVET, will not have access to sufficient financial assistance when needed (OECD 2021). Chalapati and Chalapati (2020) assert that the Office of the Vocational Education Commission (OVEC) provides subsidies to private vocational education institutions, which are encouraged to grow Thailand's capacity for training and education. Subsidies for VET private high schools differ according to the students' profiles and fields of study. For instance, VET institutions that train members of underprivileged groups, such as students from marginalised groups or students with disabilities, receive more subsidies than other types of institutions.

### *3.3.1 Thailand's obstacles to inclusive education*

Although Thailand is progressing towards inclusive education, there are still barriers that must be overcome, such as mental, physical, and regulatory limitations (Vorapanya & Dunlap 2014). Although Thailand supports impaired students' education, more work has to be done to

expand the notion of inclusive education (Othman et al. 2022). All community youngsters must attend Thai schools regardless of their readiness or aptitude. Bualar (2016) asserts that children with disabilities are prevented from attending conventional schools because universal design is not well positioned in Thailand. Along with the buildings and environments found in schools, the commute from home to school is one of the physical obstacles (Kantavong 2018). People's attitudes toward disability in Thailand are influenced by cultural influences, which may result in the notion that peers with impairments are less important. Thus, in addition to teaching Thai pupils how to assist their peers who have disabilities, they must also learn to appreciate and understand their peers.

Agbenyega and Klibthong (2015) claim that some teachers were unable to adapt the curriculum for students with disabilities and frequently taught the entire class using the same methods and materials, disregarding the special needs of each student. It is crucial to enhance pre-service regular teacher preparation programmes to incorporate curriculum and instructional adaptations for students with disabilities in regular classroom settings. This is because, in addition to special education teachers, regular teachers and all other staff members are now accountable for meeting the needs of children with disabilities. To ensure opportunities are of the same calibre throughout all locations, efforts must be made to improve access for specific underrepresented populations, particularly adults (Janyam 2022; Vorapanya & Dunlap 2014).

All people should have opportunities for inclusion due to TVET system policies (Moonpa et al. 2021). Providing greater opportunities to adults, including women, the group that is currently disadvantaged in the Thai TVET system, will improve system equity and help address skills shortages in the Thai labour market.

## **4 Discussion**

Although policies and their implementation strategies differ, there is an indication of deliberate goodwill and effort as reflected in the targeted enrolment strategies and budgetary commitments to implementing inclusive policies and practices in TVET institutions. Even though Botswana, South Africa, and Thailand are working to advance inclusive TVET education, there are still obstacles that they must all overcome. There are certain policy obstacles at the macro level or the governmental level. The meso level, or TVET institutions, is characterised by knowledge, financial, attitude, and physical constraints. The social model of disability informs the discussion of these points. In general, inclusive education requires refinement. Inclusive funding for students with impairments is also required. Figure 2 shows the interrelationship of enabling practices and factors to achieve inclusivity in providing inclusive TVET education.

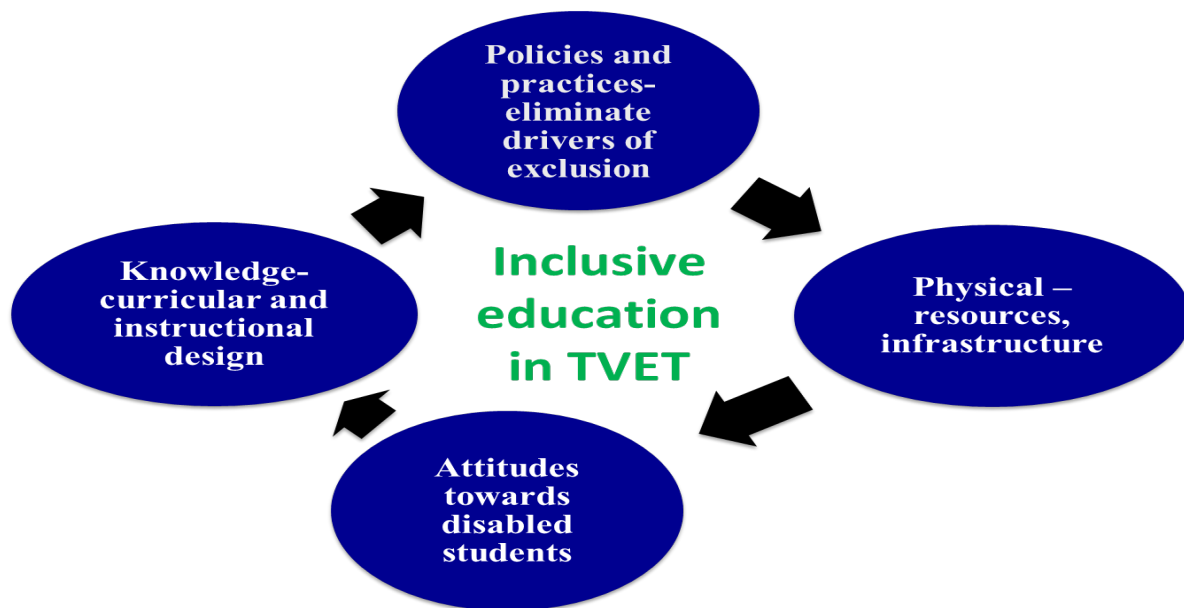


Figure 2: Framework for inclusive education in TVET (Source: authors)

The literature suggests that TVET colleges should ensure that students with impairments can access educational programmes in schools and become accepted as integral members of educational societies rather than requiring these students to have a specific level of aptitude to be admitted to colleges. It should be recognised that different kinds of disability require varied accommodations in terms of physical impediments such as infrastructure. It was observed that cultural impacts on attitudes regarding impediments were common in Thailand. According to Laska, Vibulpatanavong, and Evans (2017), most Thai students have "songsarn" or sympathy for their disabled classmates. This mindset is ingrained in Thai education. While this is a good practice, it may create the impression that classmates with impairments are less important. This means that in addition to teaching students how to support their classmates who are disabled, lecturers also need to teach them how to understand and appreciate their peers. One identified knowledge gap was the training that TVET lecturers lack to integrate curriculum and instructional modifications for students with disabilities into regular lectures. These topics need to be covered in the curriculum for pre-service teacher preparation. This is crucial because, in addition to special educational lecturers, TVET institutions, mainstream lecturers, and anyone else working with individuals with disabilities should address the needs of these students.

## 5 Conclusions

The review revealed that the three countries, Botswana, South Africa, and Thailand, are committed to providing quality education to all people despite their different disabilities. This is reflected in the existence of specific inclusive policies in each country, with evidence of continuous revisions to existing policies and guidelines to embrace developing and modern trends of inclusive practices in education and training. Several notable achievements have

been accomplished in enrolling and sponsoring people from disadvantaged groups, but the three countries face several challenges in fulfilling their complete intentions. Thailand still has to overcome obstacles to inclusion in TVET training, including legislative, structural, mental, and informational ones. In contrast, Botswana still faces the dilemma of choosing the right approach of either standard or special classes for learners with specific disabilities. Several societal shifts have adversely impacted the adoption of inclusive education in South Africa. A few of the changes in society include context-specific issues like how diversity is managed in TVET colleges and educational reforms. While the literature provides valuable insights into the challenges and strategies for inclusive education in TVET, there is limited direct information specifically addressing "TVET-inclusive education".

The studies reviewed exposed the obstacles and developments experienced by inclusive TVET education. Every country has its obstacles and progress. Although the study does not systematically compare the three countries, it gives insights into how inclusive TVET education is developing in Botswana, South Africa, and Thailand.

## **6 Recommendations**

TVET institutions must organise capacity-building workshops to upskill current employees and make their practices more inclusive. Governments that wish to support inclusive education in TVET must periodically assess their inclusive education policies and practices to identify their advantages and disadvantages and maintain current global developments. To comply with the social model theory and eliminate all stereotypes in TVET education delivery, the notion of inclusivity needs refinement. All three nations must remain steadfast in their resolve to modernise their educational facilities and infrastructure to be suitable, open, and inclusive to everyone, including those with impairments. Empirical studies must be conducted in the three countries to gather perspectives and experiences from students, lecturers, and institutional leaders regarding the prevalence of inclusivity in TVET institutions. Empirical research must guide policy decisions and behaviours and align with global norms for inclusive behaviour.

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