



Influence of Alignment of Interests on TVET–Industry Collaboration in Trans-Nzoia County, Kenya

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Abstract: Collaboration between Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions and industry is critical for aligning skills development with labor market needs. However, misalignment of interests between these stakeholders undermines the effectiveness of partnerships, leading to skill gaps and reduced employability of graduates. This study sought to examine the influence of alignment of interests on TVET–industry collaboration in Trans-Nzoia County. The study was anchored on Institutional Theory by Meyer and Rowan (1977). The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The target population comprised 33 TVET institutions, 5 principals, 333 trainers, and 28 industry representatives. Using stratified and proportionate sampling guided by Krejcie and Morgan’s formula, a sample of 178 respondents was drawn. Data were collected using structured questionnaires and interview schedules. Validity was ensured through expert review, while reliability was confirmed using Cronbach’s alpha coefficients above the acceptable threshold of 0.70. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data underwent thematic analysis. The findings revealed that limited stakeholder consultations, differing operational priorities, and inadequate feedback mechanisms significantly hindered collaboration. The study concluded that sustained engagement, joint planning, and transparent communication are essential for harmonizing interests. Recommendations include establishing joint curriculum review committees, developing formal collaboration frameworks, conducting regular stakeholder forums, and enhancing information-sharing systems. These measures, if implemented, can strengthen TVET–industry linkages and improve graduate readiness for the job market.

Keywords: TVET, Industry Collaboration, Alignment of Interests, Trans Nzoia County, Institutional Theory.

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1. Introduction

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems are increasingly recognized as critical for equipping learners with practical skills that align with labor market demands, with collaboration between TVET

institutions and industries seen as a key driver of employability and economic growth (UNESCO, 2023). The concept of alignment of interests in TVET–industry collaboration refers to the extent to which both parties share compatible goals, mutual benefits, and a commitment to jointly addressing skills gaps (OECD, 2022). When such alignment is achieved, partnerships are more sustainable

and impactful, ensuring that training programs are relevant, responsive, and inclusive (ILO, 2021). Globally, countries that have institutionalized mechanisms to harmonize the objectives of TVET institutions and industries report higher rates of graduate employment and innovation in vocational curricula (World Bank, 2023).

In developed economies such as Germany, industry-aligned dual training systems have been institutionalized through policies that ensure joint curriculum development, cost-sharing, and performance monitoring between schools and employers (BIBB, 2022). Australia's skills councils facilitate collaboration by identifying sector-specific skill needs and ensuring that TVET programs match industry standards (Skills Australia, 2023). In Canada, public-private partnerships in vocational education leverage both government funding and industry expertise, resulting in better alignment with rapidly changing technological demands (Colleges and Institutes Canada, 2023). These examples illustrate that when interests are aligned, there is greater willingness to invest in training infrastructure, apprenticeships, and continuous professional development for trainers (ILO, 2022).

In middle-income economies, such as Malaysia, industry engagement in TVET has been strengthened by national blueprints that link industrial growth sectors with vocational skills development targets (Economic Planning Unit Malaysia, 2023). South Africa's Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) ensure that training programs are industry-led, although misalignment of incentives between training providers and employers sometimes limits effectiveness (DHET, 2022). Brazil's SENAI network demonstrates how alignment of interests between industry associations and TVET providers can lead to sector-specific excellence, particularly in manufacturing and engineering (World Bank, 2022). However, these countries still face challenges in sustaining collaboration due to fluctuating economic priorities and uneven industry commitment (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2023).

In developing countries, Rwanda has made strides in harmonizing TVET curricula with employer needs through national sector skills councils, though financial constraints remain a barrier (MINEDUC Rwanda, 2023). Ethiopia's industrial park model has linked vocational training to local manufacturing needs, but misalignment persists when industries seek short-term labor rather than long-term skills development (ILO, 2023). In Ghana, collaborations between TVET providers and industries in oil, gas, and agriculture have improved employability but require stronger policy frameworks to ensure shared accountability (AfDB, 2023). These cases reveal that in low-resource contexts, aligning interests often requires targeted incentives, trust-building, and government mediation (UNESCO, 2023).

In Kenya, the TVET sector has been prioritized under the government's Competency-Based Education and Training (CBET) framework, which seeks to ensure that training is demand-driven and industry-responsive (TVETA, 2023). National policies emphasize the need for curriculum co-design, joint assessment, and industry-led internships to strengthen alignment (MoE, 2022). However, gaps persist due to limited awareness among industry players of the benefits of collaboration and reluctance by some TVET institutions to adapt to changing market demands (KIPPR, 2023). In Trans Nzoia County, whose economy is largely driven by agriculture, agro-processing, and emerging manufacturing sectors, aligning the interests of TVET institutions and industries is critical for addressing youth unemployment and enhancing local productivity (County Government of Trans Nzoia, 2023). While several TVET institutions operate in the county, collaboration with industries often remains ad hoc, with limited joint planning and inadequate monitoring of partnership outcomes (Ngugi & Koech, 2023). The mismatch between training programs and industry skill requirements has resulted in underemployment and reduced competitiveness of graduates in the job market (Wafula, 2023). These challenges point to a pressing need to investigate how alignment of interests influences TVET-industry collaboration in Trans Nzoia County.

1.1 Objective of the study

The objective of the study was to examine the influence of alignment of interests on TVET-industry collaboration in Trans Nzoia County

2. Literature Review

The alignment of interests in TVET-industry collaboration is a discourse that enhances skills development as economies strive to address skills mismatches and youth unemployment (UNESCO, 2023). Alignment of interests refers to the extent to which both TVET providers and industry stakeholders share compatible goals, engage in mutually beneficial partnerships, and commit resources towards common objectives such as employability, innovation, and competitiveness (OECD, 2022). Studies have shown that when alignment is strong, collaboration leads to improved curriculum relevance, expanded workplace learning opportunities, and enhanced graduate employability (ILO, 2022). Globally, empirical research has underscored the importance of integrated approaches in which industries participate in curriculum design, student assessment, and provision of modern training infrastructure (World Bank, 2023). A multi-country comparative study using mixed methods by UNESCO-UNEVOC (2023) found that countries with formalized collaboration frameworks reported a 25–40% increase in graduate employment rates,

interpreting these gains as evidence that mutual goal-setting reduces the time graduates take to enter the labor market. The study revealed that alignment also fosters trust and long-term commitment between partners, which is critical for sustaining collaboration amid economic uncertainties (ILO, 2023).

In Canada, research by Colleges and Institutes Canada (2023) adopted a qualitative case study design involving interviews with industry representatives and TVET administrators, finding that alignment of interests was achieved through joint development of competency frameworks and co-investment in training facilities. The findings showed that such arrangements reduced skill gaps in high-demand sectors like information technology and healthcare, interpreted as evidence of a responsive training ecosystem (CiCan, 2023). In the United States, a longitudinal quantitative study by the National Center for Education Statistics (2022) using survey data from over 5,000 institutions found that TVET–industry partnerships with aligned objectives led to significantly higher apprenticeship completion rates and wage premiums for graduates. The interpretation highlighted that mutual commitment to workforce readiness ensured curricula kept pace with technological advancements (NCES, 2022).

In the United Kingdom, a study by City & Guilds (2023) employed a mixed-methods approach to evaluate the impact of sector skills councils on TVET outcomes, showing that alignment through industry-led qualification standards improved consistency and credibility of vocational training. The findings were interpreted as evidence that when industries perceive TVET programs as serving their needs, they are more willing to engage in knowledge transfer and offer placements (City & Guilds, 2023). In Germany, BIBB (2022) conducted a national survey and policy analysis on the dual training system, revealing that alignment between chambers of commerce, industries, and vocational schools resulted in high retention rates of apprentices within the same companies post-graduation. The interpretation emphasized that co-governance and shared financial responsibility are critical to sustaining such outcomes (BIBB, 2022).

In France, a study by Cedefop (2023) used thematic analysis of interviews with policymakers and industry leaders, showing that alignment was achieved through regional skills planning committees that synchronize training programs with local economic needs. The findings suggested that decentralized decision-making enhances responsiveness and industry trust in TVET institutions (Cedefop, 2023). In Australia, Skills Australia (2023) conducted a sectoral analysis using employer surveys and training outcome data, finding that industry-aligned vocational programs led to higher satisfaction among employers and graduates, particularly in mining and

construction. The interpretation was that alignment enables quicker adaptation to sector-specific technological shifts (Skills Australia, 2023).

In New Zealand, the Tertiary Education Commission (2022) employed a longitudinal design to track graduates over five years, finding that alignment through co-designed curricula and industry mentoring significantly improved employment stability and career progression. The findings were interpreted as evidence of TVET's capacity to produce adaptive and resilient workers when industry partnerships are well-aligned (TEC, 2022). In Sweden, a study by the Swedish National Agency for Education (2023) used a mixed-methods design to assess the effect of industry involvement in vocational teacher training, finding that alignment increased practical training relevance and innovation in teaching practices. The interpretation stressed that industries benefit when vocational teachers have up-to-date sector expertise (Skolverket, 2023).

In Brazil, SENAI (2023) undertook a quasi-experimental study comparing aligned and non-aligned TVET programs, finding that students from aligned programs had 30% higher employment rates in manufacturing and engineering. The findings were interpreted as showing that alignment fosters sector-specific specialization and innovation (SENAI, 2023). In India, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (2023) used a descriptive survey design to examine industry–TVET engagement in the automotive sector, finding that alignment reduced graduate underemployment by 18%. The interpretation was that mutual goal-setting between partners ensured training met evolving industry demands (MSDE, 2023). In China, a study by the China Education Association for International Exchange (2022) using case studies of pilot programs revealed that alignment facilitated technology transfer and industry-sponsored innovation labs in TVET institutions. The interpretation highlighted that shared investment leads to greater training quality and global competitiveness (CEAIE, 2022).

In South Africa, the Department of Higher Education and Training (2022) conducted a national tracer study, finding that alignment through SETAs improved work readiness and reduced skill mismatches in engineering and hospitality. The interpretation emphasized that policy frameworks play a critical role in sustaining collaboration (DHET, 2022). In Mozambique, UNESCO (2023) used a participatory evaluation approach to study TVET–industry collaboration in the agriculture sector, finding that alignment improved productivity and farmer incomes. The findings were interpreted as evidence that localized alignment strategies address both economic and social development goals (UNESCO, 2023). In Niger, the African Development Bank (2023) conducted a pilot project evaluation revealing that aligned training in renewable energy increased youth

employment by 22%. The interpretation was that targeted sectoral alignment addresses both unemployment and sustainability priorities (AfDB, 2023).

In Zambia, a study by TEVETA Zambia (2023) employed a mixed-methods design and found that alignment through employer advisory boards enhanced the employability of graduates in construction and agro-processing sectors. The interpretation emphasized that active industry engagement in decision-making leads to more relevant training outcomes (TEVETA Zambia, 2023). In Zimbabwe, the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education (2022) conducted an institutional survey showing that alignment reduced dropout rates in technical colleges by creating clearer career pathways. The findings were interpreted as evidence that alignment strengthens student motivation and retention (MHTESTD, 2022). In Nigeria, the National Board for Technical Education (2023) used a correlational design to examine links between alignment and graduate employability, finding a strong positive relationship between employer involvement in curriculum development and employment outcomes. The interpretation stressed that alignment enhances industry trust in the TVET system (NBTE, 2023).

In Burkina Faso, ILO (2023) conducted a sectoral skills gap analysis showing that alignment in the textiles sector led to higher productivity and quality standards. The findings were interpreted as demonstrating that alignment supports economic diversification (ILO, 2023). In Ethiopia, a study by the Ministry of Education (2023) used an experimental design to compare aligned and non-aligned programs, finding that aligned programs significantly improved employment outcomes in manufacturing. The interpretation was that strong public-private dialogue underpins successful alignment (MoE Ethiopia, 2023). In Cameroon, UNESCO-UNEVOC (2023) conducted qualitative case studies showing that alignment in construction and ICT sectors enhanced technology adoption and innovation capacity. The interpretation was that shared planning ensures faster uptake of new technologies in training (UNESCO-UNEVOC, 2023). In Senegal, the World Bank (2023) conducted a policy evaluation revealing that alignment in fisheries and agriculture improved both economic and social resilience in coastal communities. The interpretation emphasized that alignment supports sustainable livelihoods (World Bank, 2023).

In Uganda, the Ministry of Education and Sports (2023) conducted a survey showing that alignment in health and hospitality sectors led to higher internship conversion rates into employment. The findings were interpreted as demonstrating the importance of aligning skill development with local labor market needs (MoES Uganda, 2023). In Tanzania, a study by VETA Tanzania (2022) found that alignment through industry advisory committees improved

training relevance and boosted self-employment rates among graduates. The interpretation was that alignment not only benefits wage employment but also entrepreneurship (VETA Tanzania, 2022). In Rwanda, MINEDUC (2023) used a participatory research approach to evaluate alignment initiatives, finding that employer-TVET joint planning improved training quality and graduate confidence in job-seeking. The interpretation was that alignment increases both technical and soft skill competencies (MINEDUC, 2023).

In Kenya, TVETA (2023) conducted a national assessment revealing that alignment through CBET frameworks has improved training quality but faces barriers such as inadequate industry participation and resource constraints. The findings were interpreted as showing that alignment is still emerging and requires stronger institutional frameworks (TVETA, 2023). The paucity of localized empirical studies on how alignment of interests specifically influences TVET-industry collaboration in Trans Nzoia County creates a knowledge gap, which the current study seeks to fill by examining the dynamics, barriers, and opportunities for improving such partnerships in the county context (Ngugi & Koech, 2023).

2.1 Theoretical Underpinning

This study was anchored on Institutional Theory by Meyer and Rowan (1977). The theory postulates that organizational structures and practices are often shaped not solely by technical efficiency or productivity concerns but by the need to conform to institutional norms, values, and cultural expectations to gain legitimacy, stability, and survival in their environment (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Scott, 2014). The theory emphasizes that organizations adopt formal structures, policies, and practices that mirror institutionalized rules in their fields, sometimes decoupling these from actual day-to-day operations to maintain legitimacy while accommodating operational needs (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Greenwood et al., 2017). Its key proposition is that institutional conformity enhances an organization's social acceptability and resource access, even if such conformity does not always improve technical efficiency (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Tolbert & Zucker, 1996).

A major strength of Institutional Theory is its ability to explain the persistence and diffusion of organizational practices across contexts, particularly where these practices are driven more by legitimacy concerns than by operational efficiency (Scott, 2014; Greenwood et al., 2017). It provides a robust framework for understanding how societal norms, regulatory frameworks, and cultural expectations shape organizational strategies and collaborations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Suchman, 1995). Furthermore, it offers explanatory power in cross-sectoral partnerships,

such as those between TVET institutions and industry, where aligning with accepted norms and stakeholder expectations is critical for sustained collaboration (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Wooten & Hoffman, 2017). However, a notable weakness of the theory is its tendency to underplay agency, innovation, and strategic choice by assuming that organizations primarily follow institutional pressures without adequately considering cases where they actively resist or reshape institutional norms (Oliver, 1991; Lawrence & Suddaby, 2006). Additionally, critics argue that it may inadequately address how power dynamics influence the creation and enforcement of institutional norms (Suddaby, 2010).

In the present study, Institutional Theory links directly TVET–industry by providing a lens through which to examine how shared goals, norms, and expectations between educational institutions and industry stakeholders are shaped and sustained by broader institutional environments (Scott, 2014; Wooten & Hoffman, 2017). The theory underscores the importance of legitimacy in fostering collaboration, suggesting that alignment of interests may be a mechanism for institutional conformity that strengthens partnerships (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Greenwood et al., 2017). For instance, TVET institutions and industries may adopt collaborative practices not only for mutual benefits in skills development but also to comply with national policy directives, donor expectations, and international TVET standards (UNESCO, 2020). Other scholars have employed Institutional Theory in various contexts to explain collaborative arrangements and policy adoption. For example, Hwang and Powell (2009) applied it to nonprofit organizations to examine how conformity to professional norms enhances legitimacy. Similarly, Boxenbaum and Jonsson (2017) used it to analyze how organizations translate global management ideas into local practices. In the African context, Mutula and van Brakel (2007) used the theory to understand ICT policy implementation in educational institutions, noting that alignment with global policy norms improved funding opportunities. In TVET studies, Okolie et al. (2020) applied Institutional Theory to assess how policy pressures and stakeholder expectations shape curriculum alignment with labor market needs in Nigeria, finding that comply with institutional norms promoted industry trust and partnership sustainability. These applications demonstrate the theory’s utility in explaining the dynamics of alignment and legitimacy, which are central to the present study’s focus on

strengthening TVET–industry collaboration in Trans Nzoia County.

3. Methodology

This study used a mixed-methods approach, combining interviews with key TVET and industry stakeholders and questionnaires for trainers, enabling a rich understanding of collaboration determinants through thematic and statistical analysis. Guided by the pragmatic paradigm, the research bridged theory and practice by integrating qualitative and quantitative findings to provide practical recommendations for enhancing TVET–industry collaboration in Trans Nzoia County. The target population included 33 TVET institutions, 5 principals, 333 trainers, and 28 industry representatives across Endebess, Cherangany, Kiminini, Saboti, and Kwanza sub-counties, representing a comprehensive cross-section of collaboration stakeholders. Using stratified and proportionate sampling based on Krejcie and Morgan’s formula, a sample of 178 respondents was selected, comprising 150 trainers, 15 principals, and 13 industry representatives. Data collection instruments included questionnaires for trainers and semi-structured interviews with principals and industry representatives, designed from literature review insights and research objectives. Validity was ensured through expert review, literature grounding, and a pilot study with 10% of participants, while reliability was confirmed via Cronbach’s alpha, targeting coefficients ≥ 0.70 . Data analysis integrated thematic coding for qualitative data and descriptive statistics for quantitative data, enabling triangulation for robust conclusions. Ethical considerations in this study involved obtaining informed consent from all participants, guaranteeing confidentiality of the information provided, and ensuring voluntary participation without any form of coercion. In addition, official clearances were sought from the relevant institutions before data collection commenced. These measures safeguarded the welfare of participants and upheld the integrity of the research process.

4. Results and Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of alignment of interests on collaboration between TVET institutions and industries in Trans Nzoia County. Respondents were requested to rate their agreement or disagreement on the statements in a Likert scale. Table 1 shows the results.

Table 1: Alignment of interests and Collaboration between TVET Institutions and Industries

Statement	SD		D		U		A		SA	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
The alignment of interests between TVET institutions and industry significantly enhances the quality of TVET programs.	12	8.2	19	12.9	4	2.7	66	44.9	46	31.3
Collaboration between TVET institutions and industry is more effective when their interests are closely aligned.	15	10.2	20	13.6	7	4.8	68	46.3	37	25.2
When interests are aligned TVET graduates are better prepared to meet industry needs.	18	12.2	22	15.0	6	4.1	65	44.2	36	24.5
Joint research projects are more successful when there is a high degree of alignment of interests between TVET institutions and industry.	14	9.5	21	14.3	5	3.4	68	46.3	39	26.5
TVET institutions that prioritize aligning their curriculum with industry requirements tend to have stronger industry partnerships.	16	10.9	24	16.3	7	4.8	67	45.6	33	22.4
A lack of alignment in interests can hinder the development of internship and apprenticeship programs between TVET institutions and industry.	17	11.6	23	15.6	8	5.4	66	44.9	33	22.4
The extent to which TVET institutions and industry invest resources in alignment efforts correlates with the level of collaboration achieved.	20	13.6	18	12.2	7	4.8	65	44.2	37	25.2
Effective communication and information sharing are more likely to occur when there is a high level of alignment between TVET institutions and industry.	13	8.8	22	15.0	5	3.4	68	46.3	39	26.5

The findings in table 1 show that a majority of the respondents, 66 (44.9%), agreed that the alignment of interests between TVET institutions and industry significantly enhances the quality of TVET programs, while 46 (31.3%) strongly agreed. Conversely, 19 (12.9%) disagreed, and 12 (8.2%) strongly disagreed, with 4 (2.7%) undecided. This implies that a significant proportion (76.2%) of respondents perceive that alignment enhances program quality, highlighting the importance of aligning interests to improve TVET outcomes. This finding aligns with studies like that of Mwangi et al. (2019), which emphasized the positive impact of aligned interests on educational quality.

Similarly, a majority of the respondents, 68 (46.3%), agreed that collaboration between TVET institutions and industry is more effective when their interests are closely aligned, followed by 37 (25.2%) who strongly agreed, 20 (13.6%) disagreed, and 15 (10.2%) strongly disagreed, with 7 (4.8%) undecided. This indicates that a substantial majority (71.5%) of respondents believe that aligned interests lead to more effective collaboration, suggesting a need for ongoing efforts to align institutional and industry goals. This finding concurs with the work of Smith (2021), who noted that when stakeholders have shared objectives and incentives, it facilitates greater cooperation and joint problem-solving.

Furthermore, 65 (44.2%) of respondents agreed that when interests are aligned, TVET graduates are better prepared to meet industry needs, with 36 (24.5%) strongly agreeing. However, 22 (15.0%) disagreed, and 18 (12.2%) strongly disagreed, with 6 (4.1%) undecided. This finding implies that a significant majority (68.7%) of respondents feel that

alignment improves graduate preparedness, underscoring the importance of aligning educational programs with industry requirements. This emphasizes the importance of ongoing efforts to align educational curricula and objectives with the evolving needs of employers and industry. This aligns with research by Kimson (2021), who emphasized that when there is strong alignment between the goals and priorities of academic programs and industry partners, graduates are better equipped with the relevant competencies to contribute effectively in their respective fields.

Moreover, 68 (46.3%) of respondents agreed that joint research projects are more successful when there is a high degree of alignment of interests between TVET institutions and industry, while 39 (26.5%) strongly agreed. On the other hand, 21 (14.3%) disagreed, and 14 (9.5%) strongly disagreed, with 5 (3.4%) undecided. This implies that a substantial proportion (72.8%) of respondents believe that aligned interests enhance the success of joint research projects, highlighting the value of collaboration in research. This highlights the significant value of collaborative research efforts when there is a shared understanding of goals and priorities. When stakeholders from different institutions or sectors have aligned interests, it facilitates more productive coordination, resource-sharing, and the co-creation of innovative solutions. This alignment helps to overcome potential roadblocks that can arise from conflicting agendas or incentives, enabling researchers to focus their efforts on addressing complex challenges more effectively. As noted by Johnson (2020), this alignment of interests is a critical factor in driving the success of

collaborative research initiatives. Echoing this sentiment, Wilson (2022) emphasizes that by continuously working to ensure that the objectives and motivations of academic and industry partners are well-synchronized, organizations can unlock the full potential of joint research projects, leading to meaningful advancements and impactful outcomes.

Additionally, 67 (45.6%) of respondents agreed that TVET institutions that prioritize aligning their curriculum with industry requirements tend to have stronger industry partnerships, with 33 (22.4%) strongly agreeing. However, 24 (16.3%) disagreed, and 16 (10.9%) strongly disagreed, with 7 (4.8%) undecided. This finding suggests that a significant majority (68.0%) of respondents perceive that curriculum alignment strengthens partnerships, indicating a critical strategy for enhancing collaboration. This indicates that a critical strategy for enhancing cross-sector collaboration is to ensure that educational programs and curricula are closely aligned with the evolving needs and requirements of industry. When academic curricula are designed in close consultation with industry stakeholders, it helps to bridge the gap between the knowledge and skills acquired by students and the competencies sought by employers. This alignment fosters a more seamless transition for graduates entering the workforce and enables organizations to benefit from a talent pool that is better prepared to contribute to their specific needs.

This finding concurs with Sharma (2021) who noted that curriculum alignment is a key driver of successful partnerships, as it demonstrates a commitment to addressing the skills gap and producing graduates who are poised for success in their respective fields.

Furthermore, 66 (44.9%) of respondents agreed that a lack of alignment in interests can hinder the development of internship and apprenticeship programs, followed by 33 (22.4%) who strongly agreed. Conversely, 23 (15.6%) disagreed, and 17 (11.6%) strongly disagreed, with 8 (5.4%) undecided. This indicates that a substantial majority (67.3%) of respondents believe that misalignment hinders program development, underscoring the importance of interest alignment for successful internships and apprenticeships. This emphasizes the importance of building aligned interests for these critical workforce development initiatives to thrive. When there is a lack of synchronization between the objectives and priorities of academic institutions and industry partners, it can create barriers to designing and implementing effective experiential learning programs. Misaligned interests can lead to disconnects in the skills and knowledge being taught, the real-world challenges being addressed, and the overall value proposition for both students and employers. As highlighted by Gupta (2022), aligning the interests of all stakeholders involved in internships and apprenticeships is essential for ensuring

these programs effectively prepare students for successful transitions into the workforce.

Moreover, 65 (44.2%) of respondents agreed that the extent to which TVET institutions and industry invest resources in alignment efforts correlates with the level of collaboration achieved, while 37 (25.2%) strongly agreed. However, 18 (12.2%) disagreed, and 20 (13.6%) strongly disagreed, with 7 (4.8%) undecided. This implies that a significant majority (69.4%) of respondents perceive a correlation between resource investment and collaboration, highlighting the need for resource allocation to support alignment efforts. This highlights the need for organizations to allocate sufficient resources to support alignment efforts between academic institutions and industry partners. When stakeholders dedicate the necessary time, funding, and other resources towards building stronger alignment between their respective goals and priorities, it can catalyze more productive and impactful collaborations. Adequate resource allocation enables the development of shared strategies, the exchange of knowledge and expertise, and the co-creation of innovative solutions to complex challenges. This finding is similar with the finding by Ramirez (2021), who established that resource investment is crucial for overcoming potential barriers to alignment, such as differing organizational cultures, communication gaps, and mismatched incentive structures.

Finally, 68 (46.3%) of respondents agreed that effective communication and information sharing are more likely to occur when there is a high level of alignment between TVET institutions and industry, followed by 39 (26.5%) who strongly agreed. Conversely, 22 (15.0%) disagreed, and 13 (8.8%) strongly disagreed, with 5 (3.4%) undecided. This finding suggests that a substantial majority (72.8%) of respondents believe that alignment enhances communication, emphasizing the importance of aligning interests for effective information exchange. This emphasizes the importance of aligning the goals and priorities of stakeholders for effective cross-sector collaboration. When partners have a shared understanding of objectives and a mutual commitment to success, it facilitates more open and transparent communication. This aligned interest helps to overcome potential communication barriers that can arise from differing institutional cultures, priorities, or incentive structures. With clear and consistent communication channels, collaborators are better equipped to share knowledge, coordinate activities, and address challenges in a timely and effective manner. As highlighted by Sharma (2022), this alignment of interests is a critical factor in enabling the seamless flow of information and ideas between academic and industry partners.

On interview with the principals one of the participants said;
“When there is a clear convergence of goals and priorities between the two stakeholders, it creates

an enabling environment for effective and mutually beneficial partnerships to thrive. In my experience, TVET institutions that are able to clearly understand and align their training programs with skill specialization in line with business needs of local industries are more likely to establish successful collaborative partnerships. This alignment ensures that the knowledge and skills imparted to TVET students are directly relevant and applicable to the current and future workforce requirements of the industries in the region.

Further, when there is a disconnect between the interests and priorities of TVET institutions and industries, it can hinder the development of meaningful collaborations. For instance, if TVET institutions are focused on delivering theoretical, academic-oriented programs that do not address the practical, industry-specific skills needed by employers, it becomes challenging to establish effective partnerships.

Moreover, the alignment of interests can extend beyond just the skills and competencies required by industries. It can also encompass shared priorities around innovation, technology adoption, and addressing emerging market trends. When TVET institutions and industries can identify and collaborate on these mutually beneficial areas, it can lead to the co-creation of industry-relevant training programs, joint research and development projects, and the establishment of technology transfer mechanisms”.

Based on this response, the principal emphasizes that TVET institutions which are able to clearly understand and align their training programs and graduate competencies with the specific skill demands and business needs of local industries are more likely to establish successful collaborative initiatives. This alignment ensures that the knowledge and skills imparted to TVET students are directly relevant and applicable to the current and future workforce requirements of the industries in the region. The response also emphasizes the challenges that arise when there is a disconnect between the interests and priorities of TVET institutions and industries. If TVET institutions are focused on delivering theoretical, academic-oriented programs that do not address the practical, industry-specific skills needed by employers, it becomes difficult to establish effective partnerships. This suggests that researchers should explore the existing misalignments between TVET institutions and industries in Trans Nzoia County and investigate the strategies that can be employed to bridge these gaps.

Furthermore, principals highlighted that the alignment of interests can extend beyond just the skills and competencies required by industries. It can also encompass shared priorities around innovation, technology adoption, and addressing emerging market trends. When TVET institutions and industries can identify and collaborate on these mutually beneficial areas, it can lead to the co-creation of industry-relevant training programs, joint research and development projects, and the establishment of technology transfer mechanisms. This broader perspective on the alignment of interests provides valuable insights for researchers to explore the multifaceted nature of TVET-industry collaborations in the context of Trans Nzoia County.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

The findings indicate that alignment of interests between TVET institutions and industry significantly enhance program quality, graduate preparedness, research collaboration, curriculum relevance, and overall partnership strength. A substantial majority of respondents associated strong alignment with more effective internships, apprenticeships, and joint projects, suggesting that synchronizing goals is essential for workforce readiness. The results further highlight that investment of resources and effective communication are more likely when interests are aligned, underscoring the need for deliberate strategic planning between stakeholders. Qualitative insights from principals confirmed that alignment not only supports skills matching but also fosters innovation, technology adoption, and responsiveness to market trends. Conversely, misalignment was seen to hinder collaboration, particularly when curricula are overly theoretical and disconnected from industry needs. Overall, the study concludes that sustained and structured alignment efforts are crucial for optimizing TVET–industry collaboration in Trans Nzoia County and beyond.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings, it is evident that stronger alignment of interests between TVET institutions and industry partners is pivotal in enhancing the relevance, quality, and impact of training programs. Therefore;

1. TVET institutions, in collaboration with industry representatives, should establish a structured curriculum review framework to be conducted to ensure alignment with emerging technologies, industry standards, and market trends.

2. The Ministry of Education and TVET Authority should mandate that all TVET institutions implement formalized internship and apprenticeship programs in partnership with industry players, beginning in the next academic year, to enhance practical skills acquisition.
3. County governments, in collaboration with chambers of commerce, should organize biannual TVET–industry stakeholder forums, to foster dialogue, share feedback, and identify collaborative research opportunities.
4. The national government, development partners, and private sector should jointly invest in upgrading TVET training facilities with modern equipment and technology within the next three years, ensuring students gain hands-on experience with industry-relevant tools.

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