COMPARATIVE REPORT

MODELS OF COOPERATION BETWEEN VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS AND COMPANIES IN AFRICA: CAMEROON, BURKINA FASO, MADAGASCAR, RWANDA, KENYA

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This comparative report analyzes the dynamics of cooperation between technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions and the private sector in five African countries: Cameroon, Kenya, Madagascar, Burkina Faso, and Rwanda. In a regional context marked by persistent youth unemployment, a shortage of practical skills, a strong predominance of the informal economy, and a continuous gap between training provision and labor market needs, collaborative initiatives between schools and companies emerge as a key strategic lever. While interest in this type of partnership is growing, survey results show that forms of cooperation remain largely ad hoc, informal, and have limited systemic impact. The most common forms are short-term student internships, occasional company visits, and a few formal internship or apprenticeship agreements. More structured mechanisms, such as work-study programs, jointly developed training courses, direct involvement of professionals in the curriculum, and financial education and mentoring programs remain underutilized.

In Cameroon, for example, companies show a strong interest in engagement, however, most businesses consider the technical skills and soft skills of TVET graduates insufficient. Kenya faces similar challenges, with deteriorating infrastructure, outdated curricula, and limited integration of industry into educational processes. On the other hand, Madagascar remains dependent on initiatives supported by external partners such as the ILO and AFD, with promising but still sporadic pilot projects. In Burkina Faso, cooperation primarily consists of short-term internships, though innovative approaches, such as involving company professionals in training, are being considered, despite a major constraint: lack of funding. Rwanda stands out positively with the introduction of a dual work-study model, coordinated by the Rwanda TVET Board, coupled with significant investment in teacher professionalization and the digitalization of training programs.

Overall, the main challenges are similar: inadequate curricula, limited involvement of companies, weak evaluation mechanisms, lack of investment, and a social perception of technical education which is still negative. In light of these findings, the report recommends formalizing partnership frameworks, institutionalizing public-private dialogue, modernizing infrastructure, updating curricula, strengthening teacher training, expanding work-study opportunities, and promoting youth entrepreneurship. It also highlights the need for

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continuous funding and a coordinated multi-stakeholder approach, bringing together the state, the private sector, technical partners, and institutions, to make TVET a true driver of social inclusion, innovation, and sustainable economic growth in Africa.

2. INTRODUCTION

In an African context shaped by rapid demographic transition, a worrying rise in youth unemployment, and profound changes in occupations driven by globalization and technological innovation, aligning vocational training with labor market needs has become a strategic priority for public policy makers. Technical and vocational education and training (TVET), long perceived as a path to relegation, is now becoming as a key lever for human and economic development across the continent. However, this renewed recognition of TVET can only be fully effective through close, sustainable, and structured cooperation between training institutions and economic stakeholders. Aligning the skills acquired by learners with the actual needs of companies requires a dynamic, reciprocal partnership between two traditionally separate worlds, which remains too often underdeveloped.

This report is part of the effort to strengthen links between TVET and the local economies. It provides an in-depth comparative analysis of cooperation practices between training institutions and companies in five African countries with diverse economic and institutional contexts: Cameroon, Kenya, Madagascar, Burkina Faso, and Rwanda. In this context, the study addresses a central question: to what extent do cooperation mechanisms between TVET institutions and companies effectively respond to the evolving needs of the African labor market, and how these partnerships can be reinforced to ensure the lasting integration of young people into the workforce?

To answer these questions, this study draws on field surveys conducted with companies and an analysis of existing mechanisms. There are three main objectives: to assess current cooperation models, to identify each country's specific strengths and weaknesses, and to create tailored recommendations aimed at enhancing the impact of TVET on youth employment and on the competitiveness of national economies.

By highlighting local experiences, ongoing innovations, and common challenges, this report seeks to contribute to a shared strategic vision for the future of vocational training in Africa, in light of the growing demands of the labor market and aspirations for sustainable structural transformation on the continent.

3. ANALYSIS OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS

The social, economic, and educational contexts of Cameroon, Kenya, Madagascar, Burkina Faso, and Rwanda have both structural similarities and distinctive features that directly influence the performance of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) systems and their ability to cooperate effectively with the private sector. These countries face significant demographic pressure, characterized by an exceptionally high share of young people in the population: 77.9% in Burkina Faso, 75% in Kenya, 60% in Madagascar and Cameroon, and 50% in Rwanda. This demographic profile represents both an economic opportunity and a major challenge in terms of training and labor market integration. While youth represent a potential asset, they are also highly exposed to unemployment, with particularly high rates in Cameroon (74%), Madagascar (42%) and Kenya (35%). Burkina Faso (34.5%) and especially Rwanda (18.17%) report lower rates, which may indicate stronger absorption by the formal or informal economy, or the effects of targeted employment-support policies.

The proportion of the population living in rural areas is another determining factor for access to TVET. Rates are particularly high in Burkina Faso (77.9%) and Rwanda (71.2 %), posing significant challenges for training infrastructure, learner mobility, and the availability of company-based internships. By contrast, Madagascar (42%), Cameroon (70%) and especially Kenya (38%) have a more urban profile, which is why partnerships with companies are easier to establish. However, this opportunity is to a great extent constrained by the prevalence of the informal economy, which accounts for 80% of workers in Madagascar, Cameroon and Kenya, and as much as 91.8% in Burkina Faso. Rwanda stands out at 24.1%, reflecting active policies aimed at formalizing employment. The dominance of informality greatly limits the structuring of partnerships with TVET, as informal businesses typically lack both the resources and the organizational culture to host interns or engage in co-developing curricula.

In terms of education, access to TVET remains limited across all countries. Kenya is the most advanced, with a rate of 27%, followed by Cameroon (10%), Burkina Faso (9.8%),

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Madagascar (5%), and Rwanda, which reports a very low rate (3.3%) despite having a structured national framework led by the Rwanda TVET Board. This situation reflects common challenges: the negative perception of technical training, a shortage of qualified teachers, outdated infrastructure, and inadequate curricula. Nevertheless, some countries have begun experimenting with promising models. Rwanda, for example, is developing a dual work-study system and investing in modernizing equipment. Burkina Faso is focusing on involving professionals in training programs and on longer internships, although funding remains an obstacle. Madagascar and Cameroon continue to rely on donor-supported projects to help structure partnerships. As for Kenya, a relatively high rate of access to TVET does not compensate for significant shortcomings in infrastructure and industrial integration.

Lastly, the size of the working-age population represents an underexploited potential: Madagascar (71.24%), Kenya (67%), Burkina Faso (65.09%), Cameroon (62.9%) and Rwanda (56%) all have a significant human resource base that remains underutilized. Without far-reaching reforms in TVET governance and genuine involvement of companies in training and integration, these human resources risk remaining underemployed, leading to unemployment, migration, or precarious work.

In sum, although these countries share common challenges, such as large young population, widespread informal employment, and limited access to TVET, their trajectories diverge depending on the quality of governance, political commitment, investment levels, and openness to innovation in training. This diversity of contexts calls for differentiated solutions tailored to each national reality, as shown in the table below:

Rwanda	**Madagascar**	**Kenya**	**Cameroon**	**Burkina**	**Socio-economic situation**
50	60	75	60	77	Young population
18.17	42	35	74	34.5	Youth unemployment
71.2	42	38	70	77.9	Rural population
24.1	80	80	80	91	Informal sector
3	5	2	10	9.8	Access to TVET
56	71.2	67	62	65	Working-age population

Table 1: Summary of the socio-economic and educational context

4. OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE

This report aims to provide a comparative analysis of existing cooperation models between technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions and companies in five African countries: Cameroon, Kenya, Madagascar, Burkina Faso, and Rwanda. Its primary objective is to assess the effectiveness of these partnerships in enhancing youth employability, improving the quality of training, and aligning skills with the actual needs of the labor market. The report seeks to identify good practices, structural limitations, success factors, and persistent challenges within each national context. It also examines the contribution of these models to reducing youth unemployment, developing entrepreneurship, and promoting socio-economic inclusion in environments largely characterized by high labor informality, limited access to TVET, and a significant gap between training supply and market demand.

The scope of the study covers several key aspects: the nature and degree of formalization of partnerships between TVET and companies; internship programs, work-study arrangements, mentoring, and integration mechanisms; the involvement of private-sector professionals in curriculum design and teaching activities; and the socio-economic and institutional environment in which these partnerships are established. The analysis criteria are based on the relevance of existing mechanisms, their impact on youth employment, the sustainability of partnerships, and the integration of innovation, emerging technologies, and a skills-based approach.

5. METHODOLOGY

In this comparative study on models of cooperation between technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions and companies in five African countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Kenya, Madagascar, and Rwanda), the methodology was based on a thorough review of the five national reports submitted via Google Drive. The data were collected, consolidated, and analyzed using digital tools, including Microsoft Excel and Power Query, to ensure a coherent structure and credible comparative analysis.

The first step involved collecting and centralizing data extracted both manually and automatically from the reports. These data included quantitative indicators (such as youth unemployment rates, access to TVET, and the level of economic informality) as well as qualitative elements related to perceptions of vocational training, types of existing partnerships, the quality of equipment, and work-study mechanisms. All the information was compiled in a single Excel file, organized by country and topic.

In the second phase, data processing was carried out using Power Query. This step allowed for data cleaning, including the removal of duplicates, to enable reliable cross-country comparisons. Qualitative data were coded according to a standardized scale from 1 to 10, transforming them into variables suitable for cross-analyses.

Descriptive analyses were then conducted using comparative tables created in Excel. These tables provided a dual perspective: cross-country and cross-topic. Dynamic visualizations (stacked bar charts) were generated to illustrate differences and similarities between countries in a clear and accessible manner.

The analysis also highlighted key trends and correlations. For example, a strong link was observed between low access to TVET and high youth unemployment rates, as well as between the absence of co-developed curricula and difficulties in integration into the workforce. These correlations helped identify common cross-cutting challenges, such as the gap between training and labor market needs, a lack of modern teaching materials, limited involvement of the private sector, and the absence of effective work-study arrangements.

Lastly, based on the consolidated results, the analysis produced a set of strategic recommendations. Three major priorities were identified: strengthening school-company partnerships through formal institutional frameworks and co-developed approaches; modernizing teaching equipment and enhancing trainers' skills; and gradually integrating emerging occupations related to digital technology and the green transition. These recommendations are directly grounded in the findings from the Power Query analysis and are validated by the trends identified in the data from the five countries.

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6. TYPES OF COOPERATION MODELS

Analysis of the five countries (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Kenya, Madagascar, Rwanda) shows that models of cooperation between technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions and companies are diverse, hybrid and constantly evolving. No country relies on a single model. In practice, forms of collaboration and cooperation vary depending on the sector, region, level of institutional structuring, and the involvement of the private sector and technical and financial partners.

In Rwanda, an integrated and dual model is gradually taking shape. Led by the Rwanda TVET Board, the country is developing a structured work-study approach in which learners spend part of their training in companies. However, this system still coexists with more ad hoc or informal arrangements, particularly in rural areas or less industrialized sectors, where cooperative partnerships exist but remain limited in scope.

Kenya, meanwhile, stands out with a structured cooperative model, particularly in large urban areas and expanding sectors (technology, agriculture, crafts). Companies play an active role in curriculum development, trainer recruitment, and the hosting of interns. At the same time, pilot work-study initiatives in certain regions signal a potential transition toward a dual model, although this has not yet become widespread.

In Madagascar, the prevailing model is incentive-based, driven largely by ad hoc projects supported by international donors (AFD, ILO, GIZ). These initiatives provide well-structured opportunities for school-company collaboration, but remain localized and are rarely embedded in a sustainable national strategy. Outside these projects, partnerships are mostly informal and ad hoc, often lacking a legal framework or monitoring mechanisms.

Cameroon relies heavily on an informal model, with partnerships that are poorly structured and often ad hoc. Most cooperation is limited to internships or company visits, with little real involvement in curriculum co-development. Still, in some industrial hubs (such as mechanics and electricity), more cooperative arrangements are beginning to emerge, signaling a partial move toward structuring. Yet these remain too marginal to drive systemic transformation.

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Finally, Burkina Faso represents a typical informal model, compounded by the predominance of the informal sector (91.8% of the economy) and very limited regulatory capacity. Nevertheless, certain regions do benefit from incentive-based programs or development projects that are beginning to foster cooperation, often in the agricultural or crafts sectors. However, these initiatives remain isolated and insufficiently institutionalized.

Country	**Type(s) of dominant model(s)**	**Key characteristics**	**Level of structuring**
Rwanda	◈Integrated ◈Dual emerging	- Work-study program in development - Structured institutional framework (RTB) - Progressive involvement of companies - Digital platforms	**High**
Kenya	◈Structured cooperative ◈ Work-study	- Collaboration between companies and schools in curriculum design - Work-study program in pilot projects - Strong involvement in urban areas	**Medium to high**
Madagascar	◈ Incentive-based (external projects) ◈ Informal	- Based on donor-funded projects - Limited formalization - Low public regulation outside of projects	**Low to medium**
Cameroon	◈Informal ◈Partially cooperative	- Ad hoc partnerships - Limited role in co-developing curricula - Willingness to engage but weak legal framework	**Low**
Burkina Faso	◈Informal ◈ Localized incentive-based	- Predominance of the informal economy (91.8%) - A few projects in crafts and agriculture - Absence of a coordinated national strategy	**Very low**

Table 2: Summary of the typology of TVET-company cooperation models (by country)

In summary, Rwanda and Kenya demonstrate the most advanced and promising cooperation patterns, incorporating elements of an integrated model. By contrast, Cameroon, Madagascar, and Burkina Faso remain largely dependent on informal arrangements or externally funded projects. This diversity of models underscores the need for a clear national sectoral strategy, supported by coordination mechanisms between training institutions, companies, and public decision-makers, to ensure better alignment between training and employment in each context.

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7. ANALYSIS OF STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES OF COOPERATION MODELS

The models of cooperation between technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions and companies reveal diverse approaches and varying levels of maturity across the five countries.

In Rwanda, the model stands out as institutionalized and evolving, with an expanding dual training scheme coordinated by the Rwanda TVET Board. This framework facilitates stronger integration of practical skills into curricula, although access to TVET remains limited and equipment shortages persist in rural areas. Company initiatives are still at an early stage but structured.

In Kenya, cooperation is well structured, with companies involved in curriculum co-design and promising pilot projects in dual training. The partial integration of financial education and entrepreneurship is an asset, though regional disparities and insufficient funding hinder the broader scaling of these advances.

In Madagascar, cooperation is largely donor-driven, with pilot projects generating sporadic but fragile innovations. Partnerships remain informal and disconnected from a structured national framework. The lack of monitoring, coordination, and support for self-employment significantly reduce both educational and entrepreneurial impact.

In Cameroon, school-company cooperation remains informal, though companies show a clear willingness to engage, particularly through internships, forums, and mentoring activities. However, the absence of legal frameworks, weak infrastructure, and the negative perception of TVET continue to undermine employability outcomes. The impact on entrepreneurship remains marginal, as initiatives are poorly structured and receive little support.

Lastly, in Burkina Faso, the cooperation model is at an early stage but shows potential in sectors such as crafts and agriculture. Local initiatives are emerging around curriculum co-design and professional involvement. Nevertheless, the absence of national coordination, limited funding, and a lack of sustainable mechanisms prevent these efforts from becoming institutionalized. The impact on education remains localized, while entrepreneurship outcomes are constrained by the lack of post-training support mechanisms.

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Country	Cooperation model	Main strengths	Main weaknesses	Impact on education	Impact on entrepreneurship
Rwanda	Dual training + institutional framework (RTB)	Structured framework, work-study program, company involvement	Limited access to TVET, uneven equipment distribution	High training-employment alignment	Initial modules, lack of structured entrepreneurial support
Kenya	Structured cooperative + work-study programs	Curricula co-design, integration of soft skills	Regional disparities, limited funding	Good balance between theory and practice	Financial education available but lack of support
Madagascar	Incentive-based model (donor-funded projects), informal	Local innovations, work-study programs (pilot)	Non-institutionalized cooperation, reliance on external funding	Heterogeneous, depends on the project	Very limited, absence of national strategy
Cameroon	Informal model, voluntary participation	Company commitment, forums, mentoring	Weak infrastructure, lack of formalization	Low training-employment alignment	Weak entrepreneurial structure
Burkina Faso	Localized model, partial curriculum co-design	Local innovations, involvement of professionals	Limited budget, absence of national coordination	Positive local experiences but not widespread	Isolated initiatives, little post-training support

Table 3: Summary of strengths and weaknesses of cooperation models

8. IDENTIFICATION OF AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

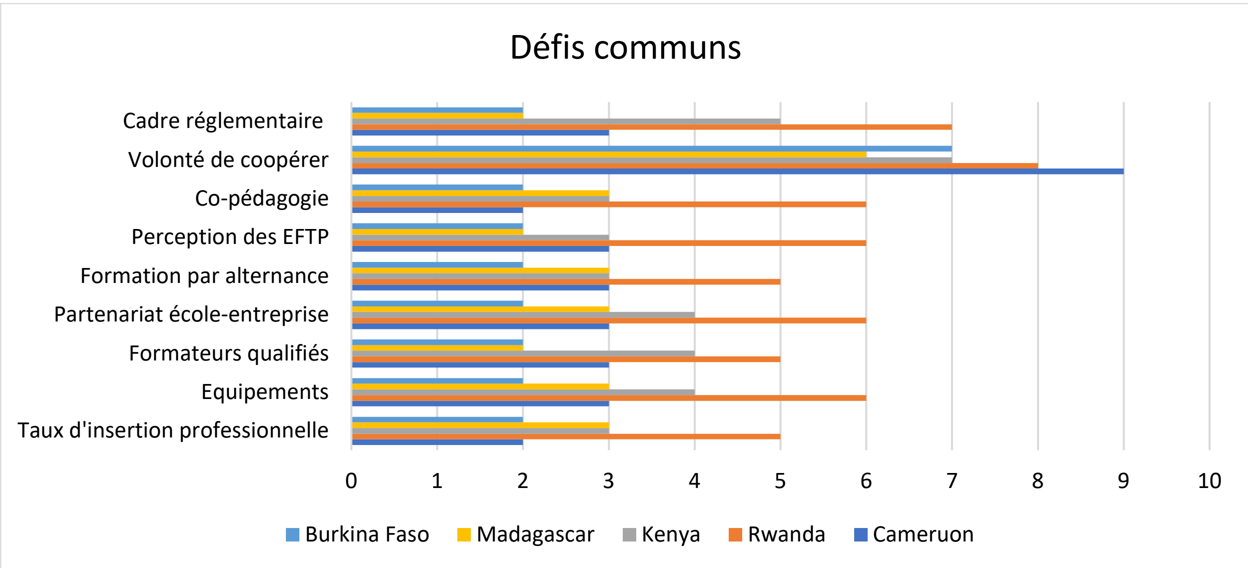

Chart: Common challenges
Translation of the chart: Common challenges; regulatory framework; willingness to cooperate; co-teaching; perception of TVET; work-study arrangements; school-company partnership; qualified trainers; equipment; employment rate

The bar chart compares the main challenges faced by five African countries - Burkina Faso, Madagascar, Kenya, Rwanda, and Cameroon - in cooperation between technical and

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vocational training institutions (TVET) and companies. Nine challenges are assessed, each rated on a scale of 1 to 10 according to perceived importance or severity.

Among these, willingness to cooperate emerges as the most critical challenge, with particularly high scores in Rwanda (9), Cameroon (7) and Burkina Faso (7). This reflects a lack of mutual commitment and trust between training institutions and companies, which hinders the establishment of effective partnerships.

Additionally, difficulties related to school-company partnerships and work-study arrangements, rated between 5 and 6 in most countries, reveal that cooperation remains insufficiently structured. The lack of internships and immersion programs limits the acquisition of practical skills aligned with labor market needs.

Furthermore, issues related to co-teaching and perceptions of TVET, with mid-level scores in Cameroon and Rwanda in particular, highlight persistent negative attitudes toward vocational training and a lack of collaborative teaching approaches between educational and economic stakeholders.

Challenges related to qualified trainers and equipment are also significant, with scores ranging between 4 and 5, highlighting a shortage of skilled human resources and a lack of modern infrastructure in institutions.

Finally, youth employment remains a major issue in all countries, with results indicating that integrating young people into the labor market remains challenging, often due to a gap between acquired skills and employer expectations. Although the regulatory framework is considered a lower-priority obstacle, it remains a crucial lever: if unclear or inadequate, it can hinder the establishment of sustainable and effective partnerships between TVET institutions and companies.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The comparative analysis of common challenges across the five countries in question (Burkina Faso, Madagascar, Kenya, Cameroon, and Rwanda) highlights several priority areas for enhancing the effectiveness of cooperation models between technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions and companies. These areas, based on the data presented in the "Common Challenges" chart, reflect shared structural weaknesses and key levers to activate for greater educational and entrepreneurial impact.

a. Strengthening the regulatory framework and governance

The chart shows that several countries, particularly Burkina Faso and Madagascar, score very low on the "regulatory framework" aspect, indicating a lack of clear laws or formal mechanisms governing partnerships. This weakness undermines the sustainability of existing initiatives. It is therefore essential to establish solid legal frameworks, supported by dedicated steering institutions capable of monitoring and evaluating school-company cooperation. With its relatively high score, Kenya provides a positive example, where targeted public policies have contributed to stronger institutionalization.

b. Expanding work-study programs and co-teaching initiatives

Work-study programs remain underutilized, with low to moderate scores in most countries. In Rwanda and Cameroon, despite a willingness to cooperate, companies have yet to be fully integrated into teaching processes. Developing learning schemes that include on-the-job training periods, curricula co-designed with employers, and direct involvement of professionals in training are key avenues for making programs more practical, adaptive, and professionally oriented.

c. Modernization of infrastructure and equipment

The lack of modern teaching equipment is widespread, as reflected in the chart with uniformly low scores (around 2 to 3). This situation limits learners' acquisition of practical skills. Public and private investments should therefore be redirected toward upgrading technical facilities, introducing digital technologies into learning, and repurposing industrial equipment for educational use.

d. Strengthening trainer competencies

The shortage of qualified trainers represents a major barrier to high-quality vocational education. Scores (often around 2 or 3) indicate insufficient continuous professional development and disconnection from reality in the industry. An effective strategy would involve enhancing teacher capacities through company-based internships, certified training programs, or the recruitment of sectoral experts within institutions.

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e. Improving the social perception of TVET

Another major challenge highlighted by the chart is the negative perception of TVET, particularly in Madagascar and Cameroon. Families and young people often still view technical pathways as a default option. It is therefore essential to enhance the image of these programs through national campaigns, success stories, innovation competitions, and platforms showcasing the achievements of young graduates.

f. Strengthening professional integration and entrepreneurship

Low employment rates reflect a persistent gap between training provision and labor market needs. To address this, curricula should be updated to align with local sectoral demands, partnerships with companies strengthened to facilitate hiring, and entrepreneurship promoted through dedicated modules, incubators, and business management training programs.

Area	Observation	Recommended actions
Governance and regulatory framework	Partnerships are poorly institutionalized	Develop legal frameworks, establish liaison units, formalize agreements
Work-study programs and co-teaching	Rare work-study programs, no co-teaching	Co-design of curricula, involvement of professionals, shared mentoring
Infrastructure and equipment	Poorly equipped workshops	Investments, industrial sponsorship, mobile online training
Trainer competencies	Low qualifications and weak links to industry	Continuous education, school-company exchanges, targeted recruitment
Social perception of TVET	Negative image among young people and parents	Awareness campaigns, public events, success stories of former graduates
Integration and entrepreneurship	Gap between training and market needs	Market research, entrepreneurship education, incubators in training centers

Table 4: Summary Sheet – Areas for Improvement

10. CONCLUSION

At the end of this comparative study conducted in five African countries, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Kenya, Madagascar, and Rwanda, it is clear that cooperation models between technical and vocational education and training (TVET) institutions and companies remain an underutilized strategic lever for addressing persistent challenges related to youth employability, the alignment of training with labor market needs, and the development of local entrepreneurship. Although all the countries analyzed share common structural

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constraints, such as the predominance of the informal economy, high youth unemployment rates, limited access to quality training, and persistently under-equipped training centers, countries like Kenya and Rwanda stand out for their innovative initiatives in work-study arrangements, co-teaching, and private sector involvement. These practices, while promising, remain marginal, often confined to donor-funded pilot projects and insufficiently embedded in sustainable national strategies.

The study identified and classified several cooperation models, including conventional internships, work-study programs, curriculum co-design, and joint school-company committees, and assessed both their educational effectiveness and their contribution to employability or entrepreneurship. Despite their relevance, these models face recurring weaknesses: the absence of a formal regulatory framework, a shortage of qualified trainers, outdated equipment, and persistent negative perception of TVET in the countries concerned. The findings converge around five priority areas for improvement: (1) establishing clear legal frameworks conducive to public-private partnerships; (2) strengthening work-study arrangements and co-teaching mechanisms, (3) investing in trainer capacity building and infrastructure modernization, (4) enhancing the image of technical and vocational education and training, and (5) institutionalizing a culture of dialogue between public and private stakeholders.

However, the study was not without limitations, both methodological and operational. Despite employing a triangulated approach that combined national reports, statistical data, and qualitative surveys, disparities in the quality, availability, and harmonization of information constrained cross-country comparability. The case of Burkina Faso is particularly illustrative. The difficulties encountered in engaging companies - despite repeated follow-ups, phone calls, and field visits - resulted in limited primary data collection and, consequently, a more constrained qualitative analysis. This lack of participation highlights the importance of embedding survey mechanisms within strong local networks and establishing formal collaboration frameworks with economic stakeholders from the outset.

In conclusion, this study confirms that strengthening partnerships between TVET and companies is a key factor in addressing the economic and social challenges faced by African countries. For these partnerships to fully realize their potential as catalysts for skills, employment, and innovation, a systemic, multi-sectoral, and coordinated approach is essential. This requires the implementation of proactive public policies, supported by clear and appropriate national strategies, as well as strong commitment from economic stakeholders, training institutions, and social partners. Finally, long-term sustainability depends on institutionalizing monitoring and evaluation practices, professionalizing data collection processes, and fostering trust between the fields of training and companies. Under these conditions, TVET can emerge as a central pillar of inclusive, sustainable, and resilient development in Africa.

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