

POLICY BRIEF

Policy Frameworks and Institutional Strategies: Strong Intent, Limited Impact

Executive Summary

Kenya has introduced strong policies, including CBET, KNQF, the National Skills Development Policy, and quality assurance reforms, to align higher education with labour market needs. However, evidence from 71 studies (2015–2025) shows that implementation remains weak, with limited employer involvement, theory-oriented curricula, poorly supervised internships, and limited monitoring of graduate outcomes. The single policy priority is therefore to make existing policy work through stronger accountability, meaningful employer partnership, and quality workplace learning rather than introducing new policies.

The Policy Task:

TURN EXISTING POLICY INTO RESULTS.

Kenya does not primarily need another layer of policies. Existing frameworks need stronger mechanisms to ensure that institutions implement them, employers participate meaningfully, and evidence on graduate outcomes informs curriculum and programme decisions.

Background

Kenya has established a strong policy framework to align higher education and TVET with labour market needs, including CBET, KNQF, the National Skills Development Policy and quality assurance reforms. However, evidence from 71 studies (2015–2025) shows a persistent gap between policy intent and implementation. The priority is therefore to make existing policy work through stronger accountability, employer partnership and workplace learning.

What the Evidence Shows

Finding	Evidence (n=71)	What it means
Strong policy framework, weak implementation.	6 major frameworks; 40 studies (56%) reported implementation challenges.	Prioritize implementation and institutional accountability.
Limited employer involvement.	24 studies (34%) reported meaningful employer involvement in curriculum design, programme review or assessment.	Strengthen employer involvement in curriculum and programme decisions.
Weak workplace preparation.	6 studies (8.5%) found poorly supervised internships, while qualitative employer evidence identified gaps in communication, teamwork, adaptability, critical thinking and problem-solving.	Strengthen workplace learning and competency development.
Graduate outcomes are rarely used to improve programmes.	18 studies reported regular graduate tracer studies or employer satisfaction surveys.	Strengthen accountability using graduate and employer outcomes



Three Implementation Priorities

Priority action	Who	When
Strengthen employer partnership in curriculum design, programme review and workplace learning.	MoE, CUE, TVET Authority, institutions, employers	12 months
Strengthen institutional accountability through graduate tracer studies, employer feedback and outcome-based programme review.	CUE, TVET Authority, institutions	12 months; every 2 years
Improve workplace learning and practical training through stronger supervision, assessment and adequate training resources.	MoE, institutions, employers	12 months; annually

Conclusion

Kenya has a strong policy foundation for improving graduate employability, but its impact is constrained by weak implementation, limited employer engagement, and inadequate workplace learning. The national priority should therefore be to make existing policy work by strengthening accountability, employer partnership, and the use of graduate-outcome evidence in institutional decision-making.

Source: Mulonzi, B.M., Owade, C.A., Baariu, I.M., Mkaisaka, M.P., Anyango, O.D., & Lawson, L.A. (2026). Post-Secondary Education Knowledge and Skills Transition to Labour Market Needs in Kenya: A Systematic Evidence Review.

Prepared by: Isaac Mwangi Baariu

