



# Challenges of the TVET sector in the context of Nepal: Stakeholders' perspectives

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# CHALLENGES OF THE TVET SECTOR IN THE FEDERALIZED CONTEXT OF NEPAL: STAKEHOLDERS' PERSPECTIVES<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

*This paper sheds light on the complexities facing Nepal's technical and vocational education and training (TVET) sector amidst the shift to a federal governance system. By engaging a diverse group of stakeholders across six provinces through interactive workshops, the paper investigates three critical areas: the challenges TVET institutions encounter in offering programs, the human resource issues within the business sector, and the local government's response to these sectoral challenges. A thematic analysis of the discussions provides the present TVET constellation as seen by the stakeholders, the business and industry sector situation, and the massive mandate but persisting confusion at the local level. The paper leverages Amartya Sen's Capability Approach to articulate the importance of collaborative engagement among stakeholders in fostering the capabilities of the youth, and it delves into the broader implications of these systemic issues for policy formulation and curriculum alignment. The study underscores the urgent need for a collaborative framework that blends research with praxis, empowering the TVET sector to effectively produce a workforce according to market demands, thereby paving the way for sustainable employment opportunities in a newly federalized governance landscape.*

**Keywords:** Youth employment, stakeholder engagement, TVET and federalization, TVET governance, curriculum reform

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## Introduction

Nepal's transformation into a federal state, as defined by the Constitution of Nepal-2015, marked a historic pivot in its governance and administrative structures (GoN, 2015). This transition from a unitary to a federal system has significantly impacted the education sector, including the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sector. The federalization introduced a three-tier governance system, with seven Pradesh (Provinces) and 753 Palikas (local governments) responsible for managing sectors previously controlled centrally, including education and TVET. This shift aims to tailor education and vocational training more closely to local needs and opportunities, potentially transforming how skills and employment training are delivered nationwide, mainly focusing on disadvantaged groups, including different castes and ethnicities (Subedi, 2016). However, the transition also presents challenges, particularly in power sharing and ensuring consistency, quality, and relevance of TVET programs across diverse and unevenly developed regions (Bhandari, 2023b).

The central thematic purpose of this paper is to explore the challenges of the TVET sector, mainly related to youth employment within the TVET sector at the local level, problems of the employment sector, and the role of local governments in the federal restructuring. Federalization is a new experience in Nepal and has just begun. However, given the long-felt issue of problems in accessing basic opportunities like employment, people expect favorable results as soon as possible. Unfortunately, people cannot see such results and are experiencing problems as earlier. The situation continues because of insufficient alignment between TVET outputs and labor market demands. These employment challenges are exacerbated by a lack of collaborative efforts between three levels of government, employers, and TVET institutions. This results in a training environment that often fails to equip youth with the skills and competencies employers require. Even after so many years of adopting the federalized system of governance in the country, it has remained unable to introduce the necessary systemic changes required for the smooth functioning of federalized governance as per the provisions outlined in the constitution. The local governments, on their part, with their constitutional mandate to plan and implement secondary education (general and technical/vocational) within their jurisdiction, could have played a coordinative role in bringing employers and TVET institutions together for building a TVET system as per the need of the labor market, of the community, and of the

learners themselves. They also could not be fully active mainly because of a lack of knowledge of what they were supposed to do, a lack of systemic capacity, and the federal system not yet developing the required systems for the effective functioning of the local governments.

Focusing on exploring and understanding these challenges, the LELAM<sup>4</sup> Nepal Team organized a series of interactions with local stakeholders nationwide. These interactions particularly focused on the challenges TVET institutions encounter in offering quality and relevant programs, the availability of skilled and competent human resources for the business sector, and the local government's response to these sectoral challenges. Drawing from the stakeholder interactions conducted at different places, in this paper, we offer insights into the complexities of implementing a federalized TVET system, the opportunities it presents for enhancing local governance and local development, and the pivotal role of stakeholder engagement in navigating the challenges of this transition.

### **Exploring TVET Landscape Through Stakeholder Interactions: A Literature Review**

Employment and education are the two crucial systems that, if well linked during different stages of the curriculum value chain, help to raise the effectiveness of a TVET system (Caves et al. 2019). So, stakeholder interactions are instrumental in formulating and refining policies within the TVET sector (UNESCO, 2021). This collaborative approach ensures that a multiplicity of voices within the TVET ecosystem are heard, enriching policy development with diverse insights and experiences. Engaging stakeholders bridges the gap between policy intentions and practical needs, elevating the relevance and applicability of TVET programs in addressing the dynamism of technological advancements and labor market shifts.

The heterogeneity of TVET contexts across different countries underscores the necessity of workable educational strategies that reflect each country's unique economic, cultural, and policy context (Sharma et al., 2019). Such heterogeneity within the country requires a localized approach for a strong TVET. The effectiveness of TVET programs is deeply intertwined with national/local peculiarities, influencing the emphasis on certain skill sets over others to align

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with economic priorities and labor market requirements (Ha et al., 2023). While industrialized nations might prioritise cultivating advanced technical competencies to fuel innovation, developing economies often focus on equipping their youth with essential vocational skills to address immediate employment needs and catalyse socio-economic development. Regarding Nepal's labour market situation, 62.2 percent of the working population is employed in the informal sector, excluding the portion of Agriculture (which is about one-fifth). Thus, the total employment in the informal sector, including the agricultural sector, is more than 80 percent (Central Bureau of Statistics [CBS], 2019). Nepal's TVET sector should also consider this fact and focus its programs on including those in TVET to enhance their competencies.

The governance structure within which TVET operates plays a pivotal role in its capacity to effectively address youth employment challenges (Bhatta, 2021). For this, transitioning to a federalized governance model and implementing a ten-year strategic plan that envisions building a responsive TVET sector aligning it with a localized labor market demands can play a crucial role (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2022). This shift necessitates the establishment of comprehensive coordination and communication frameworks to ensure educational quality and program delivery. Moreover, the engagement of industry stakeholders in the TVET process is vital for creating synergies between training programs and employment opportunities, directly impacting youth employability and economic advancement.

In sum, the discourse on TVET underscores the importance of strategic stakeholder engagement, sensitivity to country-specific contexts, and adaptive governance in formulating policies that resonate with learners' aspirations and the demands of the global economy and connect TVET to local needs (Sharma, 2013). By fostering an environment that values stakeholder input, recognizes the diversity of TVET landscapes, and prioritizes effective governance, policymakers can enhance the alignment of TVET with labor market demands, thereby contributing significantly to the goal of sustainable youth employment.

### **Stakeholder Interaction Workshop: A Contextual Methodology**

As noted above, this paper is based on the ideas and opinions TVET stakeholders shared in stakeholder interactions. While analyzing their opinion, we aimed to capture their views from

different perspectives (Cresswell, 2016). The idea was to build our understanding of their opinion in a grounded manner. These interactions are pivotal in informing and shaping policies, especially in sectors as dynamic and critical as TVET (UNESCO, 2021). Stakeholder engagement facilitates a better understanding of the diverse needs and expectations within the TVET ecosystem and enhances policy relevance and effectiveness by incorporating various perspectives.

### **Stakeholder Identification, Communication, and Selection**

In all six Pradeshes, we identified potential participants based on their roles within the TVET landscape. These included local-level officials (elected representatives and government employees at local levels), business and industry representatives, and TVET providers. The identification process leveraged KUSOED's extensive network and existing relationships, utilizing local contacts to facilitate introductions and communication. This strategy ensured the engagement of participants who could provide a comprehensive understanding of the TVET sector from multiple and diverse viewpoints and deep insights into the TVET sector's challenges and opportunities. We remained sensitive to local customs and norms when communicating with potential participants, enhancing their trust and willingness to participate and motivating them to speak up. We intended to include all three types of stakeholders—business and industry, local political representatives and employees, and TVET providers—but we could not include them in all workshops. We could have only two groups of stakeholders in two workshops because of their unavailability. Anyway, we could ensure a rich diversity of perspectives while maintaining a focus on the most pertinent issues. The total number of participants in all six workshops was 307 (Table 1).

### **Information Collection and Analysis**

During workshops, we took detailed notes to capture the discussions, insights, and nuances of stakeholder interactions and transcribed all of them. When we felt more depth and clarity were necessary, we conducted follow-up interviews. This meticulous notetaking and transcription process ensured we captured all significant details, providing a robust foundation for the subsequent analysis.

Table 1. Summary of the Stakeholders Interaction Program

S. No.	Date	Place	TVET Stakeholders			
			Local Levels	Business/ Industry	TVET Providers	Total Participants
1	22 Sep 2022	Sindhulimadhi (Kamalamai Municipality, Bagmati Pradesh)	√	√	√	66
2	3 March 2023	Sundarbazar (Sundar Bazar Municipality, Gandaki Pradesh)	√		√	42
3	2 April 2023	Surkhet (Birendragagar Municipality, Karnali Pradesh)	√	√	√	46
4	08 April 2023	Butawal (Tilottama Municipality, Lumbini Pradesh)		√	√	38
5	12 May 2023	Bardibas (Bardibas Municipality, Madhesh Pradesh)	√	√	√	55
6	22 April 2023	Biratnagar (Biratnagar Metropolitan City, Koshi Pradesh)	√	√	√	60
					Total	307

The analysis involved organizing the collected data to identify initial patterns and themes. We used Atlas.ti 24, a tool for qualitative data analysis, to facilitate the data analysis process. The software enabled efficient data coding, with 16 initial codes developed to categorize the information systematically. This coding framework laid the groundwork for generating themes, revealing the underlying structures and how the relationships interplay. The final analysis synthesized these themes, offering a nuanced understanding of the TVET sector's dynamics as perceived by the stakeholders. During this process, we even conversed with some participants via telephone to ensure we captured their ideas appropriately.

### **The TVET Landscape: Stakeholder Perspectives**

Based on the information obtained from the interaction workshops and thematized during the analysis, we organize and present findings under different sub-headings below: TVET

constellation, the situation of the business and industry sector, massive mandate but rampant confusion at local levels, and finally, collaboration as the key.

## **TVET Constellation**

Stakeholders uniformly voiced their concerns about the current state of Nepal's TVET system, citing critical issues such as the fragmentation of efforts, program duplication, outdated curricula, and a notable lack of practical training. A senior government official from one of the local government in Gandaki Pradesh described the disarray as:

*[M]any institutions are operating without approval from concerned authorities offering similar programs. Besides, there's a discrepancy in curricula even among those with the same objectives. Some follow the CTEVT curricula, which offer long-term and short-term programs, while others fall under the Ministry of Education's CEHRD (Center for Education and Human Resource Development) program.*

This senior government official believes that a curriculum must be standardized and that all should follow the standardized curriculum, thus favoring a centralized approach. The more important point is how a curriculum supports quality and relevant TVET; its standardization should not be an issue if it supports these. While it is true that sub-national governments should work under a curriculum frame provided by the federal authority, a curriculum should have the flexibility to adapt to the local context and what federalization calls for.

The discrepancy between the educational offerings of various unaffiliated institutions and the actual needs of the local market sets the stage for a deeper issue within the TVET curriculum itself. As we transit from the broader landscape of program diversity to specific curriculum development challenges, a senior TVET manager's insights from the Karnali workshop highlight the critical shortcomings in current curricular designs.

*Curriculum development within our TVET programs has significant shortcomings, failing to align with the specific demands of local businesses and industries. For instance, the processing*



*and modernization of medicinal herbs in Karnali, a valuable local resource, remains largely unaddressed by curricula. There is an urgent need for a responsive and tailored curriculum to harness the potential of local resources for economic and educational gain.*

This shows the critical gap between TVET curricula and the needs of the local areas/industries. The present TVET system, thus, is neither linked to the local production system nor the “multiple forms of knowledge” (Parajuli, 2014) that an area/community holds. Naturally, it cannot prepare the human resources trained to build on the local knowledge base and regional strengths and resources. Participants in interaction sessions also blamed the present TVET for its limited attention to new advancements. A Koshi Pradesh participant echoed this concern and noted the lack of priority given to IT skills despite their importance in the modern job market.

Despite the challenges, there are areas where TVET is making an impact. A manager of a major hydro project in Bagmati Pradesh noted the efficacy of short-term vocational training:

*Masonry training is somehow effective. Initially equipped with foundational training, these graduates demonstrate a capacity for skill enhancement over time, enabling employers to assign them progressively intricate tasks with confidence in their ability to execute such responsibilities competently.*

Despite some proven capabilities of TVET graduates in the workforce, the sector still faces significant challenges in gaining widespread recognition and esteem from the general public and employers. A principal in the Gandaki noted, “*general perception of TVET is often negative.*” A TVET practitioner from Lumbini Pradesh observed:

*Our employers have not given value to TVET programs and graduates. They prefer hiring semi-skilled or unskilled labor at lower costs over professionally trained TVET graduates. This gap underscores a broader challenge in recognizing the importance and potential of vocational training, affecting the employment prospects of individuals who have invested in acquiring specialized skills through TVET programs.*

This expression highlights a critical reality of the TVET employment relationship. Employment is the goal of most TVET graduates and the prime concern of the TVET system.

However, the employment sector has been ignoring the country's TVET system. Training providing actors of the TVET system are responsible for dialogue with the employment sector and involving them in the TVET process as a key stakeholder. The TVET and the state systems should also work to raise awareness in the employment sector that they must collaborate with the country's TVET system, as it provides the human resources for them.

The transition from education to work might not always be easy, which is truer in the case of Nepal. Even a competent graduate might face problems finding the appropriate job on time if there is no system to support the graduates in making the transition comparatively smooth. A Training Coordinator from Lumbini Pradesh highlights this point:

*There is a notable scarcity of job placement services and incubation centers designed to support vocational graduates and emerging entrepreneurs at the local level. Furthermore, in regions where these facilities exist, there is a significant issue of service overlap, which not only results in redundancy but also fosters inefficiencies within the system.*

A TVET institution principal in the same province emphasized similar issues, highlighting the broader challenges impacting youth employment:

*The TVET sector faces numerous hurdles that directly affect youth employment. Notably, employers' engagement within the TVET sector is minimal. Furthermore, there is a significant lack of career guidance and counseling services.*

The section clearly illustrates the systemic challenges within Nepal's TVET sector. Suffered by a lack of preference from the general public, employers, and other stakeholders, it is also characterized by unauthorised institutions and program duplication. One of the main causes behind these challenges is the significant misalignment between TVET programs and local industry needs and its failure to link itself with local socio-economic realities. Additionally, a notable lack of job placement and incubation services at the local level worsens these challenges. It highlights the urgent need for curricular reform and enhanced support systems to bridge the gap between vocational education and market demand.

### **Situation of the Business and Industry Sector**

The business and industry sector contends with persistent skill mismatches and HR challenges, primarily due to the misalignment between the outcomes of TVET programs and the demands of the industry. At the same time, TVET institutions often complain about the lack of interest among employers in providing on-the-job training placements. During a workshop in Lumbini Pradesh, a TVET institution's principal expressed similar concerns:

*The persistent and notable absence of sufficient placement institutions dedicated to providing on-the-job training presents a significant barrier to the practical education of our graduates. Such training is indispensable, as it furnishes students with the hands-on experience imperative for their successful transition from academic settings to the real-world demands of the workplace.*

While this shows the critical gap in work-based vocational training opportunities for students hindering their ability to apply their learned skills in practical, work-related environments, the lack of collaboration between training and the employment sector is a more critical issue.

The challenge of graduates lacking immediate job readiness is also compounded by the changing work attitudes among the youth, as noted by an entrepreneur from the construction industry in Bagmati Pradesh. This shift has led to a preference for hiring workers from neighbouring countries. It clearly shows a gap between vocational training outcomes and local industry needs. He mentioned:

*Today's youth appear increasingly motivated by the prospect of obtaining certification primarily targeted to employment opportunities overseas. This trend poses a significant challenge for local industries. These industries now face the daunting task of identifying and retaining workers who are not only skilled but also committed to contributing to the domestic market.*

The youth seeking employment abroad highlights a significant dilemma for local socio-economic relations. It drains skilled labor essential for domestic industries while offering individuals a pathway to improve their financial circumstances, often at the cost of social and family relations. As noted by a business/industry representative from Bagmati Pradesh, this phenomenon underlines the complex balance between the need for local workforce development

and the personal socio-economic benefits and costs of overseas employment, reflecting the intricate dynamics within the labor market and the social arena.

*The inclination among the youth to seek employment opportunities abroad presents a dual-edged sword. On one hand, it represents a considerable challenge by draining the local workforce of potentially skilled labor. On the other hand, it opens avenues for individuals to enhance their family's financial well-being. This migration for work, therefore, embodies both a significant loss and a potential gain.*

Referring to every growing out-country migration of youth, a business industry person from Madhesh Pradesh highlights the need for comprehensive research in this area, *“It necessitates comprehensive research to identify and tackle the fundamental reasons behind this trend, aiming to create viable domestic alternatives that can retain our young workforce.”* Likewise, a TVET provider from Karnali Pradesh suggests labor need forecasts so that education and training could align with *“the future needs of our workforce.”*

The section outlined significant sector challenges rooted primarily in the disconnect between TVET program outcomes and industry expectations. Key issues include a critical lack of on-the-job training opportunities for bridging the gap between academic learning and practical workplace demands. The evolving work attitudes among youth and a growing trend of seeking employment abroad exacerbate the challenge of retaining skilled labor within local markets. This dual dilemma of skills mismatch and labor migration poses a considerable threat to local social and economic enhancements. It strains the relationship between vocational training's objectives and the people's and community's needs and preferences. Furthermore, the limited engagement of employers with TVET and a lack of career guidance contribute to the complex landscape of challenges hindering effective youth employment in the sector. The demand for comprehensive research and research-based policy to address the critical concerns of the employment sector shows that employers are willing to contribute to addressing the problem.

The following section delves into the complexities and responsibilities delegated to local governments after federalization. We discuss how the systemic challenges within TVET are reflected at the local level due to high expectations and practical difficulties in execution.

## **Massive Mandate but Prevalent Confusion at Local Level**

The federalization of Nepal has provided local governments with significant responsibilities to plan, design, implement, and manage TVET and skilled human resources (GoN, 2017). Yet, this grand mandate is affected by confusion and practical challenges as local levels struggle to interpret and execute their new roles amidst a lack of clear directives and coordination mechanisms. A senior government official from the local government of Gandaki Pradesh expressed his grievance on the operational disconnect:

*Although municipalities have substantial constitutional authority, their practical role often diminishes to that of mere endorsers. The mechanisms for affiliating TVET providers, monitoring their operations, and enforcing quality standards remain ambiguous.*

This discrepancy between the intended scope of municipal powers and their actual application raises concerns about the effectiveness of governance structures in overseeing and enhancing the quality of vocational training institutions. This sentiment was echoed by another local official of Karnali Pradesh who spoke to the gap between constitutional provisions and practical execution:

*In the current governance structure, our responsibilities are limited to offering recommendations for matters like institutional transfers or adjustments to the curriculum. Reluctance from higher-level authorities to devolve full power and responsibilities to local governments compounds the situation, an approach that contrasts with the federalized governance model envisioned in the constitution.*

This reflection on the constrained role of local authorities and the resistance to federalization underscores a critical disconnect between the constitutional vision and the reality of governance in the TVET sector. Such a gap highlights the need for a recalibration of power dynamics and responsibilities to harness the potential of local governance.

Representatives from the business and industry sector in Madhesh Pradesh observed that local governments often lack tangible plans for the TVET sector, and accountability is a pressing concern. TVET providers in Lumbini Pradesh also expressed dissatisfaction with the local

government's approach, advocating for a model that illustrates the successful apprenticeship programs of institutions like the Butwal Technical Institute (BTI):

*The local government's efforts to support TVET institutions are noticeably lacking, leaving a significant gap in the sector's development and efficacy. For decades, the apprenticeship model at the Butwal Technical Institute (BTI) has been a successful model that provides practical, hands-on training to students.*

Local governments can use BTI's apprenticeship model as an example to mobilize their support for TVET. Notably, one municipality in Koshi Pradesh is already pioneering initiatives that promise to bridge these gaps, demonstrating the potential for impactful local engagement in strengthening TVET. A senior municipal official from Koshi Pradesh shared proactive initiatives they are taking:

*Acknowledging the critical importance of TVET in providing our youth with essential skills for their future, our municipality has embarked on a strategic initiative to weave IT competencies into the educational programs, beginning as early as secondary education. This deliberate effort underlines our commitment to fostering skills development, reflecting our belief in integrating technological proficiencies to prepare our students for the challenges and opportunities of the modern workforce.*

It is good that a municipality is doing something unique to skill young students, which might bring some good results. However, the effort seems confined to only one skill, and it is unclear if and how such an effort is linked with employability. Further, it is unclear whether such an exercise is conducted as a part of a broad plan for developing TVET in the municipality or as an isolated activity.

Despite the potential for impactful local initiatives, an overarching policy implementation gap significantly hinders progress. As articulated by a senior official from a local government in Lumbini Pradesh:

*The gap between ambitious policy goals and their execution highlights an urgent need to address this discrepancy and modernize outdated curricula. Such efforts are vital for aligning*

*educational programs with contemporary labor market needs and ensuring the workforce's readiness for future challenges.*

Because of the challenges presented by federalization, local governments in Nepal find themselves at a critical juncture, entrusted with vast responsibilities yet hampered by operational ambiguities and a lack of support from higher-level authorities. This situation has revealed a significant gap in the execution of TVET management and realizing a truly federalized governance model (Bhatta, 2021; Bhandari, 2023a). There's an urgent need for a concerted effort to bridge such a gap and empower local governments, fostering and implementing a responsive and accountable governance framework that tailors educational initiatives to local communities' unique needs.

The constitutional and legal provisions clearly state the local government's role in TVET, and they have shown their worth. Yet, as expressed by workshop participants and as the literature suggests, the functioning of the local governments has remained problematic (Acharya & Scott, 2022; Devkota & Khanal, 2024). These problems are because, as discussed above, related to the federal government, like lack of clarity in the roles and responsibilities of the local government, the unwillingness of the federal government to share the responsibilities, and related to the local government itself, like their limited capacity, internal bureaucratic and political conflicts, etc. Addressing these concerns is thus essential to improve the functioning of the local governments.

### **Navigating Challenges Through Collaboration**

The challenges currently faced by Nepal's TVET sector are complex and related to issues of governance, curriculum relevance, and the alignment of educational outcomes with labor market demands. Central to addressing these challenges is establishing effective collaborations among TVET stakeholders. Through collaborative efforts, there lies a significant opportunity to enhance the capabilities of Nepal's youth, thereby expanding their freedoms regarding employment and well-being—according to Sen's Capability Approach (Sen, 2005).

Enhancing an individual's capabilities is crucial for their ability to lead the kind of life they value (Sen, 2005). TVET programs, therefore, must be tailored to impart the necessary

knowledge and skills (capabilities) but also ensure that these can be converted into meaningful employment (functioning), ultimately contributing to the well-being of individuals. However, as our findings indicate, a disconnect between TVET curricula and the local labor market's needs results in graduates who cannot meet industry demands, hindering their functioning.

As revealed by stakeholders, the existing skill mismatches suggest an urgent need for curricula responsive to market dynamics. Sustained research-driven approaches that keep pace with technological advances and evolving industry standards help to achieve responsiveness. By forging closer ties between TVET institutions, industry representatives, and local governments theoretically sound and practically relevant, curricula can be developed and implemented.

The federalization has empowered local governments constitutionally with significant roles and responsibilities in school-level education (up to the secondary level), including the TVET. However, in practice, confusion prevails because of the policy-practice gap. This gap is mainly because of the unwillingness of the federal polity to share the power with local governments. The capability of local governments to enact their newfound roles is hindered by the lack of explicit legal provisions and coordination mechanisms, highlighting the necessity of collaboration at the governance level. Here, Sen's approach reinforces the importance of freedom to make decisions and act upon them, which, in the context of TVET, translates to local governments being free to tailor TVET programs to local needs and opportunities. Municipalities also need to work with the broader purpose of enhancing student learning and employability and maximizing the local resources and capabilities. They must also improve their capability and remain aware of their rights and responsibilities.

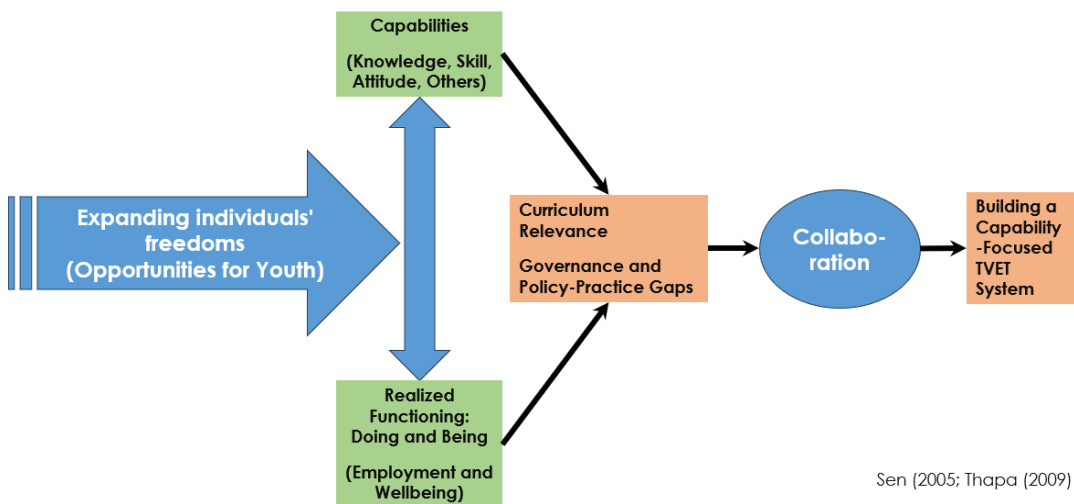
The conceptual diagram (Figure 1) indicates that by addressing curriculum relevance and minimizing the policy-practice gap through effective governance, a collaborative ecosystem can be created, leading to a capability-focused TVET system. Such a system would enhance individual capabilities and ensure the realization of functioning, aligning with the overarching vision of Nepal's federal transformation (GoN, 2015).

Collaboration emerges as the foundation for the desired TVET system—an instrument through which stakeholders can address challenges such as program diversity and the societal



perception of vocational education. Collaborative dialogue, informed by the Capability Approach, and shared goals help realize a cohesive, adaptive, and responsive TVET system that can empower the youth with the freedom to engage in meaningful employment and contribute to their personal and community well-being. With such an approach, stakeholders in Nepal's TVET sector can work together to create a system that genuinely expands the freedoms and capabilities of its participants, fostering an environment where doing and being are not just aspirational goals but tangible outcomes. As Nepal continues to face the challenges of transitioning to a federal system, it is critical to remember that its youth are not just passive recipients of education but active participants in shaping their futures.

Figure 1: Rationale for Collaborations: A Capability Approach



## Conclusions and Implications

We draw the following conclusions based on the findings and discussions presented above. Similarly, we present implications in the following sub-sections.

### Conclusions

Enhancing Nepal's TVET sector requires a deliberate shift towards collaboration and a commitment to research-based decision-making. Through the lens of Sen's Capability Approach, this paper underscores the priority of aligning TVET curricula with labor market demands and

the vital role of governance in facilitating this alignment. We suggest that a capability-focused TVET system can be realized extending beyond the mere acquisition of skills to actualizing employment and well-being for Nepali youth.

As Nepal navigates its new federal landscape, its effective management is paramount. The potential of local governance to cater to distinct local needs offers an optimistic pathway to cultivating a workforce equipped for contemporary challenges. There are challenges, in frozen form, and hence, all need to work together to thaw those challenges. Unless all stakeholders at all levels are willing to collaborate, naturally challenges will continue. This paper advocates for a strategy where research and collaboration combine to form a robust framework for TVET that resonates with the nation's developmental aspirations but also honours the aspirations of its youth.

## **Implications**

*For Policy Makers:* This paper provides some important insight for policymakers to sculpt the future path of the TVET sector in Nepal. With a proper understanding of prevailing challenges and enriched by diverse stakeholder perspectives, policymakers within different levels of government can formulate strategies that tackle fundamental issues such as curricular alignment, industry collaboration, and enhancement of their roles. This paper calls for formulating policies that resonate with the national labour market dynamics and are flexible enough to cater to the distinct needs across Nepal's federal landscape.

*For TVET Practitioners and Students:* The findings from this research can support practitioners and students within the TVET landscape, offering them insights into the sector's current situation and identifying potential opportunities and challenges. Practitioners can utilize this knowledge to refine curriculum design, pedagogical approaches, and foster stronger ties with industry counterparts. Similarly, students can utilize the findings of this research in their training and educational journey.

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