

POLICY DOCUMENT

Skills as a Lever for Private Sector Development in Kenya:
Leveraging Lessons from the Propela Dual Apprenticeship Model

Long Version





Foreword

Since its establishment, the Hilti Foundation has been committed to creating opportunities that enable people to build dignified and self-determined lives. Our investment in youth development is grounded in a simple belief: when young people are equipped with the right skills, they not only transform their own futures, they strengthen entire economies and societies. It is with this conviction that, in 2021, we launched the PropelA initiative in Kenya together with Swisscontact and leading partners from the public and private sector.

PropelA brings to life a proven Swiss approach to vocational education: a dual training model in which companies take the lead, and learning happens both in the workplace and in the classroom. By contextualizing this experience to the Kenyan construction sector, where the need for skilled workers is urgent, the project offers a tangible pathway for young people to learn, earn, and grow.

The results of the first phase speak for themselves. More than 50 companies have joined the initiative, over 200 apprentices have been formally employed and trained through two-year contracts, and nearly eight out of ten graduates have already secured employment. The model has also demonstrated a positive return on investment for enterprises, evidence that high-quality skills development is not only socially impactful but economically sound.

PropelA shows what is possible when the private sector, training institutions, and government agencies work hand in hand. It presents a systemic, scalable, and financially sustainable approach to skills development, one that places industry needs at the center while enabling young people to build meaningful careers. As we enter the consolidation phase and expand into new trades such as lift mechanics and maintenance, we reaffirm our commitment to supporting Kenyan partners in anchoring this model within national systems.

We believe the PropelA experience offers valuable insights for policy makers seeking to strengthen dual VET in Kenya. And we stand ready to continue contributing our expertise, together shaping a future where every young person can realize their potential.

Werner Wallner
Managing Director, Hilti Foundation

Foreword

Swisscontact considers skills development as an important pillar of inclusive and sustainable economic growth. Skills systems that respond to real labour-market demand, enable young women and men to participate productively in a growing economy. At Swisscontact, for more than 60 years, we work to strengthen such systems in developing context, by fostering collaboration between the private sector, training institutions, and public authorities—moving beyond pilots towards scalable and policy-relevant solutions.

Since 2021, Swisscontact has implemented the PropelA initiative in Kenya, aligned with Kenya Vision 2030 and the country's ambition to enhance productivity, employment, and competitiveness through skills development. PropelA was designed to address a structural challenge: persistent skills mismatches in a fast-growing construction sector, alongside limited pathways for young people to access quality employment. Rather than expanding training supply alone, the initiative demonstrates how demand-driven, employer-led skills development can unlock opportunities at scale.

Drawing on Swiss-inspired dual vocational education and training (TVET) principles, PropelA places the private sector at the centre of skills formation. Companies co-define occupational standards, provide structured workplace learning, and invest directly in training, while public institutions ensure accreditation, quality assurance, and system oversight. In partnership with the Hilti Foundation and other leading Swiss companies in construction sector, NITA, TVET institutions, and more than 50 companies, Swisscontact facilitated the co-creation and piloting of dual apprenticeships in plumbing and electrical trades, reaching over 200 apprentices with strong employment outcomes.

As Kenya operationalises its National Dual TVET Policy (2025), PropelA enters a consolidation phase focused on embedding this model within national systems—expanding to additional occupations, strengthening governance and financing mechanisms, and reinforcing local ownership. The evidence generated through this process offers concrete insights for policy makers and partners committed to translating Vision 2030 into effective, industry-led skills solutions. Swisscontact contributes to this journey as a facilitator of systemic change and a convener of partnerships. We invite public and private actors, development partners, and industry leaders to join us in scaling inclusive, market-driven skills systems that benefit youth, enterprises, and the broader economy.

Anirban Bhowmik
Central and East Africa, Regional Director, Swisscontact

Foreword

The National Industrial Training Authority (NITA) has a long standing mandate to advance industry relevant training in close collaboration with the private sector. Working closely with the private sector and as the custodian of the industrial training levy, NITA is uniquely positioned to bridge policy, practice, and financing—ensuring that skills development is both demand driven and sustainable. The National Dual TVET Policy (2025) further reinforces this vision, positioning Dual VET as a strategic instrument to enhance workforce competitiveness and employer engagement.

From the outset, NITA has been a core partner in the co design, accreditation, and implementation of PropelA dual apprenticeship, in partnership with Swisscontact, the Hilti Foundation, TVET institutions, and more than 50 companies. For NITA, PropelA represents a concrete step toward operationalizing the Dual VET vision.

The results of this collaboration demonstrate the potential of Dual VET to deliver value for learners, enterprises, and the wider economy. More importantly, PropelA has generated practical insights into governance arrangements, employer engagement, quality assurance, and financing mechanisms that are directly relevant to system level reform. As Kenya moves from piloting to scaling Dual TVET, these lessons provide a strong foundation for embedding dual approaches within national structures.

NITA remains committed to working with public and private stakeholders to strengthen an industry led Dual TVET system that delivers skilled workers for priority sectors. We invite employers, development partners, and training institutions to join us in advancing partnerships that translate policy into practice and unlock the full potential of Kenya's workforce.

Ms. Theresa Wasike

Director General, National Industrial Training Authority (NITA)

About this Document

Kenya has made strong commitments to skills development as a driver of economic growth, employment, and social inclusion under Vision 2030 and related national development frameworks. While recent TVET reforms have expanded infrastructure and introduced competency-based training, many young people continue to face challenges transitioning into decent work, and employers report persistent skills shortages in priority sectors. Strengthening work-based learning and private-sector engagement has therefore become a national priority. In this context, Dual Vocational Education and Training (Dual TVET) is increasingly recognised as a strategic instrument to better align skills development with labour-market demand and productivity.

This policy document contributes to Kenya's ongoing efforts to strengthen and scale Dual TVET, in line with the National Dual TVET Policy (2025). It is intended for policymakers, public institutions, employers, development partners, business associations, and TVET providers involved in designing, financing, and delivering skills development systems.

The document draws on lessons from the PropelA initiative, a Swiss-inspired Dual VET model, financed by the Hilti Foundation, implemented by Swisscontact in partnership with national institutions, TVET providers, and private-sector companies. PropelA was designed as a learning and systems-building initiative, testing how employer-led dual apprenticeships can function within Kenya's institutional, regulatory, and economic environment, with an initial focus on the construction sector.

This document synthesises practical insights that are relevant for system-level decision-making. It highlights enabling conditions for effective Dual TVET, including governance and coordination, employer incentives, financing arrangements, quality assurance, data use, and inclusion. These insights are drawn from implementation experience and are directly relevant to translating policy intent into practice.

Swisscontact publishes this document aiming to contribute with global technical expertise and contextualised evidence and to support dialogue, alignment, and partnership. It offers a shared reference point for stakeholders seeking to move from pilots to sustainable, nationally embedded Dual TVET systems. By connecting practical experience with policy priorities, it aims to contribute to the development of an industry-led Dual TVET ecosystem that expands opportunities for young people, strengthens enterprise productivity, and supports Kenya's long-term economic transformation.

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1. Background and Context

Kenya is confronting a persistent challenge of high youth unemployment—estimated at 37–40%, far exceeding the national average and constraining the country’s economic participation and social stability. With a rapidly growing young population, the pressure to create pathways into productive employment has intensified. As the country advances its development aspirations under Vision 2030 and the Bottom-Up Economic Transformation Agenda (BETA), the competitiveness of Kenya’s economy increasingly depends on a workforce equipped with industry-relevant technical and vocational skills that match the needs of priority sectors such as construction, manufacturing, energy, digital services, and the MSME economy.

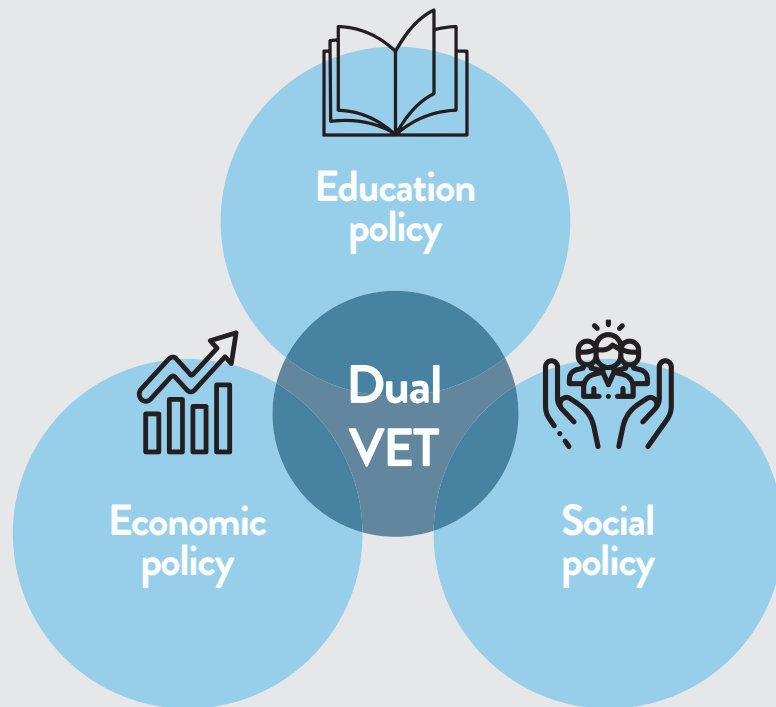


Figure 1 VET Policy (Source: adapted from SDC VSD typology 2019)

In this context, technical and vocational education and training (TVET) has become a central policy priority. Recent reforms—including the shift toward competency-based education and training (CBET), modernisation of training infrastructure, and expansion of Vocational Training Centres—reflect the government’s commitment to improving relevance, accessibility, and quality of skills development. Yet, despite these reforms, the TVET system continues to face challenges: limited work-based learning opportunities, weak linkages between training institutions and industry, fragmented governance, and insufficient uptake of labour-market data for planning. These gaps underline the need for new models of training that more effectively bridge education and employment.

1.1. Dual VET as a Strategic Response

Internationally, many countries—including Kenya—are looking to dual vocational education and training (dual VET) as a high-impact model for building a skilled workforce and reducing youth unemployment. Dual VET, which integrates structured workplace learning with school-based instruction, is widely regarded as a “best practice” for countries seeking to escape the middle-income trap and accelerate industrial upgrading. Evidence shows that by embedding practical, industry-driven training into education pathways, dual VET improves employability, productivity, and long-term career mobility—delivering economic, social, and individual benefits. In this regard, Dual VET is not just an education policy but is aligned with economic and social policies.

The model also aligns strongly with global development goals. Dual VET contributes directly to SDG 4 (inclusive and quality education), SDG 8 (productive employment), SDG 10 (reduced inequalities), and SDG 1 (poverty reduction), by supporting equitable access to skills and improving transitions into decent work.

1.2. Alignment with Kenya's Policy Frameworks

Kenya's policy architecture provides a strong mandate for deepening industry-education collaboration and scaling work-based learning. Agenda 2063 emphasizes skills development and productive employment as fundamental to Africa's transformation. Vision 2030 identifies TVET as a key enabler of economic competitiveness, calling for closer links between industry, training institutions, and technology-driven sectors. Sessional Paper No. 1 of 2019 further underscores the need for a coherent, inclusive, and labour-market-aligned education and training system. More recently, MTP-IV (2023–2027) places human capital, job creation, and value-chain-driven economic transformation at the centre of national development priorities, stressing the role of private-sector collaboration in addressing skills gaps. The TVET Policy 2024 reinforces these commitments by explicitly promoting private-sector participation in curriculum design, equipment provision, governance, and work-based learning to raise the quality and relevance of training. Together, these frameworks position dual VET as a strategic mechanism for strengthening Kenya's skills ecosystem and contributing to economic transformation, social inclusion, and youth empowerment.

1.3. Emergence of Kenya's National Dual TVET Policy

To consolidate these ambitions, Kenya has developed the National Dual TVET Policy (2025), shaped through collaboration between government, development partners, and industry actors. The policy identifies key priority areas—governance, financing, partnerships, quality and relevance, data systems, access and equity, and awareness creation—signalling strong political will to institutionalise dual VET nationally. The formulation of strategies and implementation matrices marks an important step toward operationalisation; however, effective implementation will depend on translating policy intent into practical, scalable models. Pilot initiatives with proven outcomes therefore play

a crucial role in informing policy execution. They demonstrate feasibility, provide cost-benefit evidence, build trust among actors, and reveal the system adjustments needed to integrate dual VET into mainstream TVET provision.

1.4. The Swiss Model as Reference Point

The dual VET policy acknowledges the Swiss model as a global benchmark. Switzerland's success draws from a governance structure where the private sector is firmly in the lead, co-financing and shaping training content, and participating directly in decision-making. Its curriculum emphasises long-term employability through the development of both occupational and transferable competencies. Teaching follows an action competence-oriented pedagogy, delivered through a balanced mix of theory and practical training. The system's decentralised governance ensures responsiveness to labour-market needs, and its strong permeability allows learners to progress into higher professional and academic pathways, supporting lifelong learning. Importantly, inclusion is embedded through flexible entry points and structured support mechanisms. While globally admired, research shows that transferring dual VET models to countries with different institutional, economic, and social contexts requires careful adaptation. Differences in industrialisation levels, governance capacities, and labour-market structures mean that not all elements are directly transferable, and success depends on identifying context-appropriate components and sequencing system reforms.

1.5. Kenya's Experience: Insights from the PropelA Model

Since 2022, the PropelA project—implemented by Swisscontact in collaboration with the private sector, NITA, and TVET institutions—has provided a practical demonstration of how Swiss-inspired dual VET principles can be adapted to Kenyan realities. Supported by philanthropic and private-sector partners, the programme piloted dVET in construction trades (plumbing and electrical) at KNQF Level 5. Early results—strong employment

outcomes, positive returns on investment for companies, and clear improvements in learner competencies—have positioned PropelA as a credible reference model for Kenya.

Swisscontact brings long-standing experience in adapting Swiss dual VET principles to developing-country contexts, combining workplace training with school-based learning in ways that fit local economic realities. Its approach ensures the private sector leads in shaping relevant, practice oriented training through co design and close collaboration with training institutions and public actors. As host of the Donors Committee for Dual VET Secretariat, and co-founder of Market System Development for Employment global community of practice, Swisscontact also shares international best practices and lessons learned to strengthen dual VET systems globally.

PropelA is now entering a consolidation phase aimed at anchoring its innovations within Kenya’s TVET system. Its lessons offer valuable insights for designing governance mechanisms, employer-engagement strategies, financing models, quality-assurance systems, and inclusion measures relevant to the national dual VET rollout.

This policy document synthesises learning from PropelA and places it within Kenya’s broader economic, education, and social policy priorities. It aims to support the development and implementation of a coherent, scalable dual VET system by offering practical guidance to policy makers, development partners, private-sector actors, TVET institutions, and youth stakeholders. The document highlights the importance of coordinated public-private collaboration and provides evidence-based recommendations for enhancing governance, quality, relevance, and sustainability in Kenya’s dual VET ecosystem.

2. Key Insights from PropelA’s Application of a Swiss-Inspired Dual VET Model in Kenya

PropelA demonstrates that dual VET can be successfully adapted to Kenya when governance, incentives, financing, quality management, data use, and inclusion are coherently aligned. The experience provides practical insights for implementing the National Dual TVET Policy and scaling a more industry-driven, work-based system nationwide.

Evidence Based Adaptive Management

Vision setting

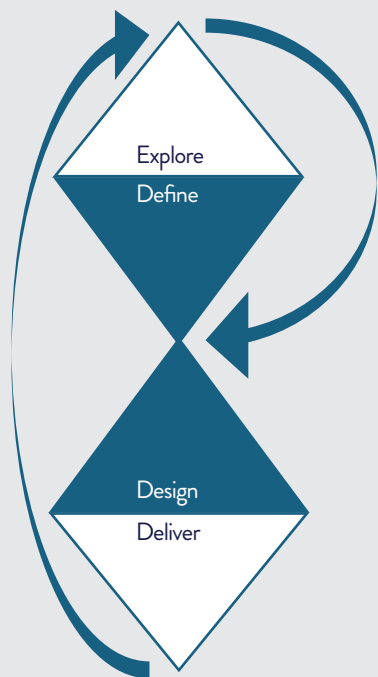
- Economic sectors growth
- Labor Market System
- VET system
- Skills Needs Analysis

Features

- 2 yrs NITA programs (electrician & plumbing), KNQF Level 5
- 75% workplace learning
- Private sector in the driving seat
- 3 patriate governance
- Sustainable business model
- Focus on quality

Phase I Results

- 300 graduates
- 50 companies
- 79% employment rate
- 28% – 30% ROI for companies
- 110 – 146 SROI



2.1. Governance and Coordination: A Shared Vision and Mindset Shift

Effective dual VET requires strong, structured cooperation between public and private actors. While each actor has its own interests, successful systems create mechanisms for collaboration on legal frameworks, curricula, financing, access, assessment, and quality assurance. These foundations underpin productivity, skills development, and sustained employment.

In Kenya, dual TVET currently operates through two parallel streams: TVETA under the Ministry of Education and NITA under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. While both streams feature in the National Qualifications Framework, their approaches differ—NITA programmes are more practice-oriented, whereas TVETA programmes remain more school-based. The National Dual TVET Policy presents an opportunity to strengthen coherence, harmonise standards, and enhance learner progression across qualification levels.

PropelA shows that private-sector engagement is critical from the outset to build early commitment and ensure labour-market relevance. In the initial phases, companies contribute mainly by co-designing curricula and learning plans, drawing on Swiss dual VET experience while operating within national standards set by public actors, particularly NITA. As the program is implemented, companies and TVET institutions become central to operationalising training—from apprentice recruitment to workplace learning and assessment. In early Dual VET systems, private-sector influence is strongest at the micro level through direct company–school partnerships. As the system matures, this role must evolve toward more formalised engagement at meso and macro levels. PropelA’s tripartite governance model illustrates this progression, with companies moving from individual participation to shared ownership, and industry bodies increasingly assuming coordination, quality-support, and policy-dialogue functions.



Figure 3. Accountability of public and private actors in dual VET system governance

Initiatives aiming to transform dual VET systems should develop a vision of change toward a private sector more active role, with concrete accountabilities, and taking initiative. This requires a systemwide mindset shift were employers move from being “consulted stakeholders” to co owners of training, with clear responsibilities and authority.

2.2. Incentive-Based Private-Sector Engagement and Partnerships

Industry engagement is the backbone of dual VET—but it occurs only when incentives are meaningful. Companies participate not because dual VET is morally desirable, but because it delivers value to their workforce pipeline, productivity, and competitiveness. Incentives must therefore reflect real costs, risks, and benefits.

The PropelA model demonstrated that companies achieved a return on investment (ROI) of 28–30%, typically reaching break-even in Year 3 or 4. When firms successfully accessed NITA training levy reimbursements, ROI increased significantly—up to 49%—and break-even was reached within the two-year apprenticeship period. A total of KES 2.3 million was reimbursed to participating companies in the first cohort, covering apprenticeship-related expenses, including school fees.

These tangible financial returns reinforced companies’ sense that their contributions were valued, strengthening their commitment to both



Figure 4. Private sector behavior change funnel

programme implementation and participation in broader dual VET policy development.

Successful engagement and collaboration of the private sector must be multilevel.

i. Micro level – company–school collaboration

The micro level is the foundation of dual VET and begins with direct, one-to-one partnerships between companies and TVET institutions. Together, they agree on learning plans and schedules, recruitment criteria, contracts, stipend and fee arrangements, placement processes, mentoring structures, assessment methods, and quality-assurance mechanisms. Clearly defined roles and frequent communication are essential for fine-tuning implementation. Insights from PropelA’s successful company partnerships can inform criteria for selecting and managing business partners under the Dual TVET Policy.

ii. Meso level – business associations as system intermediaries

At the meso level, business associations play a critical role in sustaining and scaling dual VET. Effective dual systems rely on trusted intermediaries that bridge micro-level actors (schools and companies) with macro-level decision makers, facilitate long-term planning, and support consistent adherence to agreed standards. PropelA’s experience illustrates that associations such as Kenya Association of Manufacturers (KAM) can provide essential services—sector promotion, company mobilisation, apprentice recruitment, and mentor training—while building internal capacity through dedicated dual VET units. As dual VET grows, associations can expand these services and develop fee-based offerings, strengthening both system capacity and their financial sustainability.

iii. Macro level – structured employer participation in governance

At the macro level, meaningful private-sector engagement requires formal representation in dual VET governance and standard-setting bodies. PropelA demonstrates that private-sector participation in CBET curriculum development improves occupational standards and

programme relevance. Strengthening and expanding mechanisms such as Sector Training Committees and ensuring business associations hold seats in national and sectoral governance structures, will help align dual VET policies with labour-market needs and support coherent system development across trades and sectors.

Local governments may also contribute by integrating dual VET into county youth and economic development programmes, strengthening access, and addressing local labour-market needs.

2.3. Financing Dual VET: Structuring Sustainable Business Models

Kenya’s Dual VET Policy recognises that dual training requires additional and well-structured financing, given the extra effort needed to engage, support, and coordinate with companies. PropelA demonstrates that dual VET has a distinct cost structure compared to school-based TVET, with different cost bearers—but also higher potential benefits when key conditions are met.

New cost centres arise on the company side, including apprentice stipends, recruitment and placement, and in-company mentoring. These upfront investments, however, are offset by measurable gains. Firms benefit during training from apprentice productivity, and after training through higher profits from retained certified technicians and reduced recruitment and onboarding costs. In PropelA, companies achieved positive ROI when apprentices spent substantial time in real work environments (75% of the training period), when programme quality was high, when matching was effective, and when apprentice-related costs were reimbursed through the NITA levy. Sensitivity analysis shows that levy reimbursement is a major driver of faster and higher ROI, underscoring the importance of a fully functional levy–grant mechanism. SMEs, in particular, benefit strongly because skilled apprentices significantly boost their operational capacity.

For TVET providers, dual VET creates new responsibilities—company engagement, field visits, quality oversight, student support—but also new opportunities. Where permitted by regulation, dual VET can become a sustainable income-generating activity, especially when providers develop services such as mentor training or short courses. Providers must calculate their break-even price to set appropriate programme fees while maintaining affordability.

Learners also incur costs, typically linked to transport and access to workplaces. However, they benefit through stipends during training, improved employment outcomes, and increased earnings. These earnings are expected to be higher especially in progression pathways (e.g., Level 6 upskilling), where partial self-financing becomes feasible because future wage gains are higher.

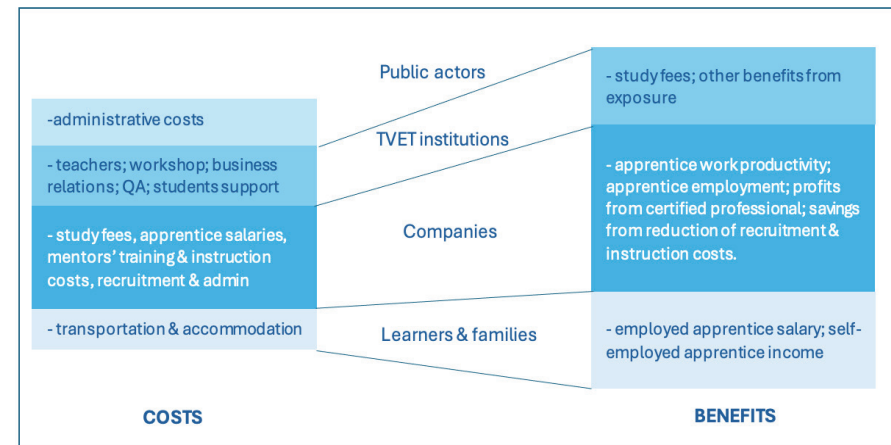


Figure 5: Running costs and benefits composition & share in PropelA Dual VET

PropelA's business model, cost-sharing arrangements, and financial tools provide practical guidance for implementing the financing priorities under the Dual TVET Policy—particularly in designing incentive mechanisms, allocating resources efficiently, and reducing barriers for companies and learners. The programme's results also present a strong case for scaling dual VET through county TVET and youth initiatives, and for mobilising additional funding streams such as results-based financing, vouchers, and targeted scholarship schemes to support priority groups and promote equitable access.

2.4. Quality and Relevance of Training: A Joint Responsibility and a Driver of Productivity

Quality and relevance sit at the core of an effective dual VET system. PropelA's experience demonstrates that stronger training quality leads directly to better employment outcomes—higher salaries, improved long-term employability, and measurable productivity gains for companies. Firms that retain certified technicians report access to higher-value contracts and more reliable service delivery. These outcomes confirm that a robust quality-assurance ecosystem is essential for national rollout.

Dual VET curricula must be designed through structured processes that incorporate substantive private-sector input. Employers are best positioned to articulate the required occupational and soft skills, making their participation in CBET development and learning-plan design indispensable. Relevance also depends on explicitly integrating soft skills, which employers consistently identify as critical for workplace performance. PropelA shows that quality improves when systems shift from one-off inspection to continuous quality management. This requires close collaboration at the micro level—between TVET institutions and host companies—as well as clear standards and oversight at the meso and macro levels.

- **TVET Institutions** carry accountability for certification and therefore must adopt internal quality-management systems covering recruitment, learning-plan execution, school-company coordination, and student well-being. Implementing dual VET demands new institutional roles (e.g., company liaison, mentor coordinator) and greater engagement outside the classroom, including regular company visits and monitoring of workplace learning.
- **Host Companies** play a critical role through structured and consistent workplace instruction. Mentor training is especially important, as is ensuring HR staff understand the rules and responsibilities tied to apprenticeship programmes.
- **National Agencies** play a critical role in setting standards and ensuring that quality-assurance systems are consistently implemented across dual VET. In the PropelA model, NITA fulfilled this function by monitoring workplace learning environments and mentoring practices—an approach strengthened by its long-standing collaboration with industry and its routine engagement with companies through activities such as industry attachments.
- **Business Associations**, acting at the meso level, can reinforce quality through peer learning, standardised tools, and services such as mentor training, quality audits, and employer sensitisation.

PropelA's practice and lessons provide a strong basis for operationalising the quality and relevance priority of the National Dual TVET Policy. They show that sustained quality emerges when each actor—schools, firms, associations, and national bodies—understands its role and collaborates through shared standards, consistent feedback loops, and jointly managed learning environments.

2.5. Data and Evidence: Foundations for Decision-Making and Behaviour Change

The National Dual TVET Policy highlights that dual VET is still at an early stage in Kenya and that reliable, systemwide data on programme effectiveness remain limited. PropelA confirms that high-quality data are essential at every stage of dual VET—informing design, guiding implementation, and assessing impact.

Effective planning requires accurate information on labour-market dynamics, including sector growth, job quality, demand for skilled labour, and opportunities for self-employment. These insights help national agencies prioritise occupations for new qualifications and guide TVET institutions seeking to diversify their training offerings.

Using data during implementation ensures continuous monitoring and strengthens delivery quality. When TVET institutions and host companies gather and review accurate data, they can make adaptive decisions—such as revising workplace rotations, adjusting school-based instruction to address identified gaps, or providing targeted support to specific learners. This feedback loop is a core element of a quality-management approach, where improvement is continuous rather than reactive.

PropelA’s experience demonstrates the value of using data to measure effectiveness. Instruments such as tracer studies, reveal graduate employment outcomes, enablers and barriers to success, and the extent to which training aligns with labour-market needs. Tracer findings inform career guidance, mentorship, curriculum adjustments, and decisions on infrastructure and resource allocation. Tracer evidence also highlights areas such as the growing interest in self-employment, pointing to the need for supportive ecosystems for youth entrepreneurs.

Measuring value for money provides evidence of the dual VET business model. ROI analysis is critical for understanding the business case from a company’s perspective. PropelA shows the importance of using a rigorous methodology—especially where company data are incomplete and must be derived through standardised calculations. Sensitivity analysis helps identify the main drivers of ROI and guides differentiated strategies for SMEs, large firms, and specific sectors. Complementary Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis provides a broader view of societal benefits, capturing improvements in livelihoods and public-good outcomes such as safer electrical work, improved energy efficiency, and better water and sanitation infrastructure.

Building institutional capacity for data use. For these tools to be effective, institutions must have clear mandates and the skills required to collect, analyse, and use data. Rather than developing new tools in isolation, strengthening existing systems is more efficient. The Kenya Labour Market Information System (KLMIS) offers a strong foundation and could be enhanced to integrate tracer studies and selected provider-level data in collaboration with TVET institutions.

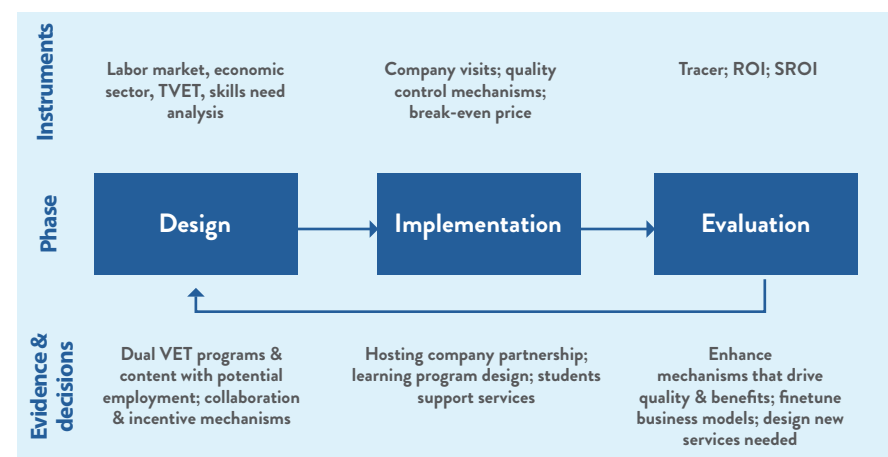


Figure 6: PropelA’s used evidence for decision making and behaviour change

Digital systems present significant opportunities to reduce administrative burdens and improve data availability. Digitising apprentice applications, company placements, and levy reimbursement processes can streamline workflows while generating real-time data on users and performance. Such systems help optimise programme management, strengthen quality oversight, and improve the relevance of dual VET as it scales nationally.

2.6. Expanding Access and Inclusion in Dual VET

Dual VET has strong potential to widen access to labour-market opportunities for groups traditionally excluded from technical training. PropelA shows that dual VET is particularly attractive to vulnerable youth, as the stipend and the prospect of longer-term employment make participation more feasible. However, stipends alone do not eliminate barriers. Learners from remote or low-income households often face transport, accommodation, and subsistence challenges, requiring targeted support mechanisms to ensure retention and success.

PropelA also demonstrates that dual VET can help increase women's participation in technical trades, where they have historically been underrepresented. Employers valued the commitment, attention to detail, and reliability shown by female apprentices, suggesting strong potential for greater gender diversity. Realising this potential, however, requires gender-responsive workplaces—including appropriate tasks, safe working conditions, and supportive social environments. Support measures must therefore address not only learners' needs but also employers' capacity to host women and girls effectively.

To reduce dropout and improve matching, learners need career guidance, psychosocial support, and well-being services, especially those from vulnerable backgrounds. These supports protect learners from exclusion while also

safeguarding companies' training investments. The Dual TVET Policy should therefore include clear guidance for TVET institutions and companies on inclusive practices and targeted support measures aligned with its access and equity objectives.

2.7. Awareness and Social Recognition

Despite dual VET's prominence in Kenya's policy agenda, public awareness of available programmes and pathways remains limited. PropelA confirms that bottom-up awareness strategies are more effective than broad national campaigns, particularly in contexts where dual VET is still emerging and unfamiliar to most learners, families, and employers.

The most credible and influential ambassadors for dual VET are current apprentices, graduates, and partner companies. Sharing success stories within communities, through peer networks and local events, fosters trust and encourages youth and parents to consider dual pathways. Similarly, when companies publicly share their positive experiences—particularly evidence of improved productivity and successful recruitment—other firms become more willing to participate.

Evidence-based messaging is critical. Highlighting real outcomes, such as employment rates, earnings, and company benefits, strengthens the credibility of dual VET and accelerates uptake. As the system expands, awareness efforts should remain grounded in proven results, authentic voices, and community-level engagement, supporting a gradual but sustainable shift in perceptions about technical careers and work-based learning.

3. Implications & Recommendations

Kenya has the policy intent and early proof points to scale Dual VET. Operationalisation requires joined up governance, incentive compatible financing, managed quality at school and workplace, robust evidence systems, and targeted inclusion measures. The recommendations below specify key implications for main stakeholders.

3.1. Dual VET System Level Implications

In this crucial moment of dual VET reform, it is important to establish solid foundations for well-functioning and performing system.

Participatory Governing Mechanisms. A successful dual VET system relies on industry having formal decision making power alongside government and social partners, ensuring that training standards, occupational profiles, and assessment practices truly reflect labour market needs. At the same time, Kenya must align the MoE–MoLSP and TVETA–NITA interface, with clearly defined roles in setting standards, developing curricula, accrediting providers and workplaces, and overseeing assessments to create a coherent, efficient, and trusted governance framework.

Finance & Incentives for Behaviour Change. A financially sustainable dual VET system requires a predictable business case for firms, anchored in clear and timely levy–grant operations that allow companies to recover part of their training costs and realise tangible returns through productivity gains, retention, and long-term skills development. At the same time, training providers must adopt operating models that cover the additional costs of dual delivery—such as company liaison functions, workplace supervision, and quality management—while ensuring that programme fees and support mechanisms preserve equitable access for low-income learners.

Strengthen Permeability and Employment Pathways. A robust Dual VET system must guarantee that learners have clear, credible pathways both into employment and into further learning, enabling them to progress into advanced dual programmes, higher professional qualifications, or other education routes. Strengthening permeability makes Dual VET more attractive, ensures long-term career mobility, and aligns the system with the evolving demands of the labour market. Equally, Dual VET should recognise self-employment and enterprise creation as legitimate and valuable employment outcomes, especially in sectors where independent contracting, micro-enterprise formation, or service-based entrepreneurship are common. Embedding both upward learning routes and diverse employment opportunities into the Dual VET architecture reinforces the system’s long-term sustainability, enhances its relevance to Kenya’s economic priorities, and increases its appeal to youth and employers alike.

Quality Management. A strong dual VET system treats the workplace as a formal learning site, requiring companies to meet clear hosting standards—such as providing qualified mentors, safe and adequately equipped work environments, and structured training plans aligned with national occupational standards. Assessment and validation both at school and workplace learning conditions, ensure requirements are met, supporting consistent, high-quality practical training across all participating firms.

Evidence & Digitalisation. To strengthen system efficiency and accountability, as well as increase trust in the system, dual VET must institutionalise evidence-driven management, including regular labour-market analysis, tracer studies, ROI/SROI assessments, and consistent provider reporting. At the same time, digitising key workflows—such as apprentice placements and levy-grant reimbursements—can streamline processes, reduce administrative

burdens, and generate real-time data that supports better planning, quality assurance, and decision-making.

Inclusion & Social Recognition. To strengthen inclusion and social recognition in dual VET, the system must scale targeted support measures—such as transport and hostel assistance, counselling services, and gender-responsive workplaces—to ensure all learners can participate and persist. At the same time, evidence-led awareness efforts, grounded in real success stories and measurable outcomes, are essential to shift public perceptions and build trust in dual VET as an attractive and equitable pathway to decent work.

3.2. Recommendations for Key Stakeholders

3.2.1. Policy Makers

- **Clarify Mandates & Decision Rights** through inter agency compacts that delineates the TVETA–NITA interface and MoE–MoLSP roles across the full policy cycle. Embed formal employer representation in national and sector bodies so industry shares decision rights with government and social partners.
- **Optimize the Levy–Grant System.** Strengthen the incentive environment for firms by widening the levy scheme scope, simplifying documentation, digitising claims and tracking. Consider revision of expense reimbursement rate based on evidence.
- **Strengthening Progression and Employment Pathways.** Strengthening the Dual VET system requires seamless permeability within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) so learners can progress into higher-level dual programmes, professional qualifications, or complementary education routes without

institutional barriers. This requires harmonised standards across TVETA and NITA, clear links between occupational profiles and learning progression, and consistent recognition of competencies create transparent pathways for advancement. Dual VET must also be anchored in Kenya’s economic and competitiveness strategies, ensuring that upskilling routes reflect sector priorities, industrial upgrading needs, and opportunities for wage employment or self-employment.

- **Adopt a National Dual VET Quality Framework.** Recognise both the school and workplace as formal learning sites with validation criteria (including OSH, equipment adequacy and inclusion), combined with teachers and mentors’ standards, as well as administrative and students support services. Make certain national agencies and other relevant authorities support TVET institutions provide the necessary guidance and support as well as ensure business associations support employers to meet them.
- **Institutionalise Monitoring & Results Measurement for System Steering.** Mandate a core set of provider KPIs (e.g., enrolment, dropout, inclusion, teaching & learning, graduate placement, median earnings, employer satisfaction), annual tracer studies. Establish processes and tools as well as increase capacities to use these data for adaptive management and system promotion. Integrate these data into existing performing systems. Require providers and associations to use evidence for continuous improvement (curriculum updates, rotation design, learner supports).
- **Finance Inclusion.** Create ring fenced inclusion funds—nationally and/or via county windows—to support transport and accommodation stipends, targeted bursaries for vulnerable youth, and gender

responsive workplace improvements (e.g., facilities, policies, mentor sensitisation). Link disbursements to verified participation and retention outcomes.

- **Align with County Systems.** Embed Dual VET priorities in County Integrated Development Plans and youth programmes, with counties co-funding local access supports (transport, accommodation) and convening employers to expand quality workplace learning opportunities aligned to local value chains.

3.2.2. Development Cooperation & Implementing Agencies

- **Long-Term Financing to Build an Evidence-Based Incentive Framework.** Development partners should provide patient, flexible capital to help Kenya build the evidence needed to design effective incentive mechanisms for public and private sector participation in dual VET. Long-term financing enables testing of different incentive models, assessing firm-level ROI and public sector cost-benefit dynamics, and determining the level of support required to engage companies—especially SMEs—at scale. This approach can help identify the optimal incentive mix that ensures financial sustainability, strengthens employer commitment, and supports public agencies in their regulatory and quality assurance roles.
- **Support to Scale what is Relevant and Sustainable.** Facilitate system-level impact by helping expand successful, sector-specific and locally grounded dual VET pilots into new regions and emerging growth sectors, while supporting continuous adaptation of the model to evolving economic and labour-market needs.

- **Employment-Focused System Support.** Donors and implementers can strengthen the Dual VET system employment outcomes by supporting labour-market insertion, and career-advancement functions that extend beyond training. This includes building sector-wide structures for employer recruitment, competency-based progression frameworks, and clear upskilling pathways, while also recognising entrepreneurship as a viable employment outcome through links to business-development and financing services. These systemic supports help ensure Dual VET leads to sustained employment, improved earnings, and long-term social and economic impact.

- **Strengthen Donor Coordination for Coherent and High-Impact Dual VET Support.** Development partners should maximise the use of dual VET working groups and other platforms, to coordinate their investments and technical assistance to ensure full alignment with the principles and priorities of Kenya's Dual VET Policy. This includes adopting common standards, sharing evidence and lessons learned across programmes, and taking joint, complementary actions to avoid disruption, fragmentation and maximise system-level impact.

- **Expand Impact Financing and Results-Based Mechanisms.** Support the introduction of impact financing tools—including results-based financing and outcome-linked vouchers—to reward verified performance in dual VET and expand access for priority groups. By tying funding to measurable outcomes such as placement, completion, and inclusion of vulnerable youth and women, donors can help de-risk employer participation, incentivise quality delivery by providers, and channel resources toward models that demonstrate real impact.

3.2.3. Private Sector

- **Provide Strategic Leadership in Shaping and Delivering Dual VET.** Industry has the opportunity to co-shape dual VET by participating in policy dialogue and shaping dual VET through co-developing occupational standards and CBET curricula, hosting apprentices in high quality workplaces, investing in mentor preparation, and use data on apprentice performance to strengthen both training relevance and their internal workforce development systems.
- **Integrate Dual VET Into Business Strategy and Competitiveness.** Companies should treat dual VET as a strategic component of their business model—a way to build a reliable HR pipeline, improve productivity through hands on apprentice contribution, and reduce recruitment and onboarding costs. Firms can further strengthen competitiveness by hiring certified graduates or collaborating with those who become self-employed technicians and entrepreneurs, expanding their supply chain and service networks while reinforcing sector wide skills quality.
- **Build Collective Capacity through Business Associations.** Companies should work not only individually but through sector and national associations to develop Dual VET units that coordinate employer onboarding, recruitment, mentor training, and peer driven quality assurance. These shared structures reduce transaction costs, build consistency across the sector, and create a sustainable platform for scaling Dual VET.
- **Promote Inclusive, Safe, and Supportive Workplaces.** The private sector should adopt gender responsive and youth friendly policies, ensure safe working environments, and offer flexibility for vulnerable

learners—helping widen the talent pool and strengthen the credibility and social legitimacy of Dual VET.

- **Champion Dual VET in Business Forums and Peer Networks.** Companies should raise Dual VET as a standing topic in business forums, openly share experiences with peers, promote the benefits of hosting apprentices, and engage in dialogue with firms that have already piloted the model. This helps build a critical mass of companies that accelerates adoption and deepens private sector ownership of Dual VET nationwide.

3.2.4. TVET Institutions

- **Embrace a Partnership Driven Mindset and Contribute to Economic Development.** TVET institutions should position themselves not only as training providers but as active partners in the labour market and drivers of local economic development. This involves cultivating deep, trust based collaboration with companies, remaining open to co-designing training content, and exploring new forms of cooperation—including diversified programme offerings and sustainable business models that respond to sectoral needs. By adopting a forward looking, opportunity driven mindset, institutions can strengthen their relevance and long term sustainability within the Dual VET ecosystem.
- **Transition from School Centred Delivery to a Dual Learning Culture with Redefined Roles.** Institutions must embrace a Dual VET identity that values the workplace as a key learning environment and recognises that teachers, managers, and administrative staff will need to adopt new responsibilities and redefine existing roles. This includes engaging outside the classroom, coordinating workplace learning,

supporting mentors, and aligning content with real work tasks. Such openness to organisational change and professional evolution is essential for delivering a coherent dual learning experience.

- **Lead with Quality and Adaptive Management.** Quality improvement should be continuous and collaborative, driven by feedback from employers, learners, and instructors. Institutions should foster open internal discussions that encourage reflection, shared learning, and adaptive management of programmes. Creating a culture where data, peer insights, and workplace observations inform decisions strengthens both institutional credibility and the overall performance of Dual VET.
- **Foster Inclusion, Learner Well Being, and Informed Career Pathways.** Institutions should champion an inclusive, learner centred ethos—ensuring safe, welcoming environments and working with companies to support diverse learners. This includes providing guidance for career decisions, psychosocial support, and interventions that help learners navigate workplace expectations. By ensuring all learners can access and succeed in Dual VET, institutions reinforce equity, retention, and the long term reputation of vocational pathways.

4. Conclusion

Kenya is at a pivotal moment in transforming its skills ecosystem. The experience of PropelA demonstrates that Dual VET can be successfully adapted to Kenya, but only when key system functions—governance, incentives, financing, quality assurance, data, and inclusion—work together coherently. Crucially, the PropelA journey confirms that global models such as the Swiss Dual VET system cannot simply be transplanted; they must be

thoughtfully contextualised to local institutional realities, economic structures, and labour market dynamics. Effective system-building requires discerning which elements can be transferred, which must be adapted, and which need to be built anew through Kenya specific solutions.

Dual VET must be understood not only as an education reform, but as a strategic lever for economic development, youth engagement, and national competitiveness. Achieving this vision requires clarity of roles across TVETA, NITA, MoE and MoLSP; formalised private sector co decision; predictable financing and incentives for firms; and consistent quality management that recognises workplaces as formal learning sites. It also requires embedding permeable pathways—to employment, further learning, and entrepreneurship—within the National Qualifications Framework to ensure mobility and long term career growth for graduates. Equally important is the institutionalisation of evidence and digitalisation, so that decisions are guided by labour market intelligence, tracer studies, ROI/SROI analysis, and real time data.

A future-ready Dual VET system is one that is inclusive, enabling vulnerable youth and women to participate and succeed through targeted supports and gender-responsive workplaces. Social recognition—built through authentic stories of apprentices, employers, and graduates—will remain essential for expanding acceptance and uptake.

The recommendations in this policy document outline a shared agenda for policy makers, development partners, the private sector, and TVET institutions. But these actions will only be transformative if pursued through coordinated, long term system-building rather than short-term projects. Dual VET requires sustained political commitment, stable financing, enduring public–private dialogue, and continuous adaptation as Kenya’s economy evolves.

Swisscontact stands ready to support this long-term transition—drawing on the PropelA experience and over 60 years of global expertise in VET system transformation and private-sector partnership. By working collaboratively with national and county governments, industry bodies, companies, and TVET institutions, Swisscontact is committed to helping Kenya build a coherent, context-appropriate, and resilient Dual VET system that delivers lasting economic and social impact.

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