

Review Article

Leadership and Disability Support Systems in TVET Institutions: A Literature Review

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Abstract

This literature review examines leadership practices and disability support systems in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions, with a focus on Ethiopia. Guided by questions on leadership influence, existing supports, implementation challenges, and improvement strategies, the review draws from theoretical frameworks like the Full Range Leadership Model, incorporating transformational, transactional, and complementary styles such as benevolent and distributed leadership. Key findings highlight Ethiopia's progressive policies, including the Inclusive Education Strategy (2012) and Master Plan (2016–2025), yet reveal persistent barriers: policy-practice gaps, inadequate infrastructure, teacher training deficits, societal stigma, and weak industry linkages. Empirical evidence from Ethiopian studies shows low enrollment of persons with disabilities (PWDs), inaccessible facilities, and limited student voices. Comparative insights from Botswana, South Africa, and Nigeria underscore similar issues, emphasizing the need for adaptive curricula and partnerships. Proposed strategies include enhancing teacher training via Inclusive Education Resource Centers, infrastructure upgrades, regional councils for industry collaboration, stigma-reduction campaigns, and monitoring dashboards. Research gaps include insufficient studies on leadership impacts and PWD experiences. The review concludes that balanced leadership is essential to bridge gaps, foster inclusion, and ensure equitable TVET outcomes for PWDs.

Keywords

Inclusive Education, TVET, Disability Support, Leadership Styles, Ethiopia

1. Introduction

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) is key to preparing people with the skills needed for today's fast-changing global economy [1]. However, for people with disabilities (PWDs), accessing education and job opportunities through TVET institutions remains a major challenge worldwide, in both developing and developed countries [1-3].

Despite global efforts and policies promoting inclusive education, many young people, particularly those with disabilities, still encounter obstacles that prevent them from fully participating and succeeding in TVET programs [2, 4]. Overcoming these barriers requires strong leadership dedicated to building inclusive environments and breaking down systemic hurdles [3, 5].

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2. Methodology

This narrative literature review examines the role of leadership practices and disability support systems in fostering inclusive education within Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions, with a primary focus on Ethiopia and insights from comparable global contexts. It synthesizes selected sources including peer-reviewed articles, books, policy reports, and gray literature from organizations like UNESCO, the World Bank, and Ethiopia's Ministry of Education from 2010 to 2025, exploring leadership and disability support in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions with a primary focus on Ethiopia and comparative insights from developing countries such as Botswana, South Africa, and Nigeria. A systematic search across databases like Scopus, ERIC, Google Scholar, and JSTOR used key terms including "TVET," "inclusive education," "disability support," "leadership styles," and "Ethiopia," expanded with phrases like "transformational leadership," "industry partnerships," and "inclusion of persons with disabilities" to incorporate global perspectives, prioritizing English-language materials directly relevant to TVET, disability inclusion, and educational leadership while excluding non-peer-reviewed, unrelated, or pre-2010 sources unless foundational.

The review is guided by four central questions: (1) How do leadership practices shape inclusive education in Ethiopian TVET institutions, particularly in creating supportive learning environments for students with disabilities? (2) What disability support systems are currently implemented in these institutions, and what are their primary limitations? (3) What challenges impede the effective implementation of inclusive education policies and practices in the TVET sector? (4) What strategies does the literature propose to enhance leadership and disability support for more equitable TVET systems?

To address these questions, relevant literature was identified through targeted searches in academic databases, including Scopus, ERIC, and Google Scholar, using keywords such as 'inclusive education,' 'TVET,' 'disability support,' 'leadership styles,' 'Ethiopia,' and 'vocational training.' Additional sources were drawn from policy documents and grey literature, including reports from the Ethiopian Ministry of Education, UNESCO, and the International Labour Organization (ILO), to capture contextual and practical insights. The review encompasses literature from 1994 to 2025, aligning with Ethiopia's education policy timeline and recent global studies on TVET and disability inclusion. Sources were selected based on their relevance to leadership, disability support, and inclusive education in TVET, prioritizing peer-reviewed articles, policy documents, and empirical studies. Non-English sources and studies focused exclusively on general education were excluded to maintain focus.

The literature was synthesized thematically, organized around the four guiding questions, with findings grouped into leadership practices, disability support systems, implementation challenges, and proposed strategies. Sources were evaluated for credibility and relevance based on their methodological

rigor, alignment with the Ethiopian TVET context, and contribution to understanding disability inclusion. A limitation of this review is the scarcity of empirical studies on the lived experiences of students with disabilities in Ethiopian TVET, necessitating reliance on broader inclusive education research and policy analyses. This narrative approach provides a comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge while highlighting critical gaps for future research.

3. Theoretical Framework: Leadership for Inclusion

3.1. The Full Range Leadership Model

The Full Range Leadership Model offers a helpful way to understand leadership in TVET institutions, covering three main styles: transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire [10]. Each style impacts how inclusive environments are created for students, especially those with disabilities.

3.1.1. Transformational Leadership

Transformational leaders inspire and uplift their teams, encouraging everyone to go beyond what's expected [10]. This style consists of charisma or idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration [10]. They bring energy through charisma, motivate with inspiring goals, encourage creative thinking, and provide personalized support [10]. In TVET settings, these leaders encourage teachers to adapt lessons creatively, inspire students with disabilities to reach their full potential, and offer tailored support to meet individual needs [10, 11]. They work to boost confidence in students with disabilities, helping them become engaged and self-assured learners [12].

3.1.2. Transactional Leadership

In contrast, transactional leaders focus on clear goals, defined roles, and structured tasks, often using rewards or corrections to keep things on track [10]. This approach ensures systems run smoothly and daily tasks are completed effectively [10]. For students with disabilities, transactional leaders make sure policies are followed, resources are used well, and support services are reliably delivered, creating a stable and predictable environment for everyone [12-14].

3.1.3. Laissez-Faire Leadership

Laissez-faire leadership takes a hands-off approach, giving staff and students a lot of freedom with minimal guidance or oversight [10]. While this can encourage independence, it may leave students with disabilities without the structured support they often need, potentially hindering their progress [10, 14].

3.2. Complementary Leadership Styles

Other leadership styles add depth to this framework. Benevolent leadership focuses on empathy and care, creating supportive environments that reduce stigma for students with disabilities [12, 15]. Socially just leadership prioritizes fairness, ensuring equal learning opportunities for all [16, 17]. Distributed leadership spreads decision-making across teams, encouraging collaboration among staff, students, and stakeholders [18-22].

Together, these approaches tackle barriers like societal stigma, limited resources, and gaps in policy implementation, fostering a more inclusive TVET environment [23]. Leadership is crucial in creating inclusive environments in TVET institutions. The way leaders approach their roles shapes how policies are put into practice, how resources are distributed, and how students with disabilities are supported. Table 1 compares different leadership styles, showing their main characteristics and how they can be applied to promote inclusion in TVET settings.

Table 1. Leadership Styles for Inclusive TVET.

Leadership Style	Key Features	Application to TVET Inclusion
Transformational	Inspires, motivates, individualized	Adapts curricula, empowers PWDs
Transactional	Clear roles, rewards-based	Ensures policy compliance, resource allocation
Benevolent	Empathy, care	Counters stigma, fosters compassion
Socially Just	Equity-focused	Addresses inequalities in access
Distributed	Shared decision-making	Enhances stakeholder collaboration

4. Defining Inclusive Education

Inclusive education is about making sure everyone, no matter their abilities or background, has equal access to learning opportunities. According to UNESCO (2021), it involves taking steps to remove barriers and create fair educational experiences for all. In Ethiopia, this idea is described as a way to bring people together in shared learning spaces, encouraging participation and belonging [24]. The country has formalized this approach through policies like the Special Needs Education Program Strategy (2006), the Inclusive Education Strategy (2012), and the Master Plan for Special Needs/Inclusive Education (2016–2025). These policies focus on flexible curricula, varied teaching methods, and robust support services to meet diverse needs [6-9]. In Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), inclusive education means ensuring everyone, regardless of their socio-economic status or abilities, has access to the same high-quality training and can achieve their full potential [5]. It goes beyond just making buildings accessible; it involves adapting curricula, using diverse teaching approaches, and providing tailored support services to meet a wide range of needs [4, 1]. This ensures that skill training programs are approachable and accommodating, helping all students succeed [5].

5. Policy and Historical Context in Ethiopia

Policy and Historical Context in Ethiopia has made significant strides toward including people with disabilities in its education system, starting with its 1995 Constitution, which ensures equal rights for all [25]. The country furthered this commitment by signing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2010 [26]. The Ethiopian Education and Training Policy of 1994 positioned Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) as a vital area for developing skilled workers. Over the years, policies like the Inclusive Education Strategy (2012), the Master Plan for Special Needs/Inclusive Education (2016–2025), and the Ethiopian Education Development Roadmap (2018–2030) have prioritized creating inclusive learning environments [6, 27-29]. To support these efforts, the Guideline for Inclusion of People with Disabilities in TVET (2015 draft) encourages adaptations like Disability-Inclusive Education and Training (DIET) Resource Centers, which provide specialized materials and resources [30, 27]. Additionally, the World Bank's General Education Quality Improvement Program for Equity (GEQIP-E) (2015/2016–2019/2021) has expanded Inclusive Education Resource Centers (IERCs), improving facilities and access [31]. However, there's still limited information on how these DIET centers are used or their impact on student enrollment, pointing to the need for more detailed evaluations [27, 6].

6. Empirical Findings: Progress and Challenges in Ethiopian TVET Leadership

Research shows that while managers in Ethiopian TVET colleges recognize the importance of inclusive education, they often fall short in taking active steps to make it a reality, showing limited ownership of strategic plans [13]. Key obstacles include inadequate infrastructure, limited funding, and a lack of staff to support students with disabilities [13, 19]. Studies in Ethiopia highlight both progress and ongoing challenges in TVET institutions. For example, Kedida's (33) research in Oromia Regional State's polytechnic colleges found that leadership tends to focus heavily on organizational structures rather than on human resources, stakeholder relationships, or inspiring visions. This narrow approach limits partnerships with industries and other key players, which are essential for inclusive education [33, 32]. Additionally, Kebede et al. (35) emphasize that strong leadership is crucial for building TVET-industry connections to improve job prospects for graduates. However, weak partnerships often lead to curricula that don't align with industry needs, contributing to high unemployment rates among TVET graduates. For instance, one study noted that only a small number of TVET graduates in Ethiopia found jobs within a year, underscoring the impact of poor industry collaboration [35, 34].

6.1. Disability Support and Inclusion

Despite strong policies, implementation lags due to socio-cultural, economic, and infrastructural barriers [35]. Enrollment of PWDs in TVET remains low, with only few of students in Ethiopian TVET institutions identified as having disabilities [24]. Inaccessible facilities, such as the lack of ramps and adaptive technologies, hinder participation [24]. The Teacher Educators in Higher Education as Catalysts for Inclusive Practices (TECIP) project found that TVET teachers lack training in inclusive pedagogies, with only few proficient in sign language, and often exhibit negative attitudes due to insufficient support [27, 36]. These findings align with global studies, such as [19] which highlight inadequate teacher training and infrastructural deficits as universal barriers.

6.2. Student Perspectives

Limited empirical data exists on the experiences of PWDs in Ethiopian TVET. However, a small-scale study reported that students with disabilities face discrimination, and inaccessible workshop spaces, negatively impacting their academic engagement. These findings underscore the need for participatory research to amplify student voices and inform inclusive practices [27, 37]. Malle, Pirttimaa, and Saloviita's (24) study, *Inclusion of Students with Disabilities in Formal Vocational Education Programs in Ethiopia*, offers a critical empirical examination of the systemic, resource-based, attitudinal,

and policy-related barriers limiting the participation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in Ethiopian Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions. Drawing from student experiences, the research reveals how disability often overshadows individual choice and aptitude, with some learners coerced into leaving preferred programs due to assumptions about their impairments. The lack of adaptive learning materials, itinerant trainers, and supportive infrastructure further constrains their learning, compounded by attitudinal barriers among trainers who believe disabled students should succeed without targeted assistance. Students also face accessibility challenges both physical, such as unfriendly transport and college environments, and social, such as insufficient encouragement and inclusion while employability prospects remain uncertain without cooperative programs and services like sign language interpretation and vocational counseling. The study's policy analysis exposes a "policy-practice gap," as Ethiopia's Education and Training Policy inadequately addresses disability inclusion in strategy and prioritization. While opportunities for inclusion exist, the findings stress the need for concrete measures, including national surveys, mainstreaming disability issues, enhancing staff skills, adapting curricula, and conducting local needs assessments. Serving as a foundational reference for future projects, this research not only maps the barriers and opportunities in Ethiopian TVET but also underscores the urgency of student-centered, policy-informed interventions to bridge systemic gaps and foster equitable participation for PWDs.

6.3. Comparative Insights from Global Contexts

Many countries aim to make Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) schools welcoming for students with disabilities (SWD), but putting this into action is often difficult. Even with rules supporting inclusion, SWD face barriers that stop them from fully joining in and succeeding, often feeling left out even if they are enrolled. In Botswana, few SWD attend TVET schools, and the way things are done can feel confusing and excluding [37]. While schools may offer special admissions or separate classes to help SWD learn at their own pace or use adapted tools, these steps can accidentally make people think negatively about disabilities, leading to social and learning exclusion [37]. Students often face unfair treatment, name-calling, and emotional harm, which makes it harder for them to succeed [37]. There's a big gap between what policies say and what happens in schools, made worse by teachers not knowing enough about disabilities or how to teach inclusively. Buildings are also often hard to access for SWD [37]. In South Africa, TVET colleges mostly serve black students from poor communities, and SWD face big challenges with both the lessons and the school buildings [38, 39]. For example, students with physical disabilities struggle because there aren't enough ramps for wheelchairs, so they need help to move around or have to give up their dream careers due to unadapted programs [38]. The idea that

everyone should be able-bodied creates an unwelcoming environment [14, 39]. SWD also deal with negative attitudes, like being called names or judged by peers and some teachers [41, 39]. Other problems include a lack of good learning materials, not enough assistive tools, strict courses, and unsupportive teachers [41]. Poverty makes things harder by limiting access to resources and lowering living conditions [42]. Despite these challenges, SWD show strength, using African values like determination, positivity, and self-advocacy to keep learning [43]. In Nigeria, rural farmers with disabilities struggle to work because of their physical limits and the belief that they can't be productive [44]. A big issue is the lack of experts who can design and make assistive devices, along with little knowledge about these tools [44]. However, TVET programs—whether formal classes, informal training, or hands-on learning—can help by teaching people to create assistive devices and giving SWD practical skills to make their own tools [44]. This can help them fit better into society, reduce poverty, and find good jobs [44]. Leadership is key to making TVET schools supportive for SWD. In Ethiopia, leaders struggle to focus on school needs, build ties with businesses, and teach job-ready skills [32]. Most leaders focus on rules and procedures, ignoring other important areas like supporting people, making connections, or inspiring others, which are needed to get resources and build partnerships [32]. This narrow focus weakens links between TVET schools and businesses, meaning teachers miss out on real-world experience and courses stay outdated [32]. Leaders' lack of awareness also lowers teachers' motivation to use inclusive teaching methods [32]. Leadership training in Ethiopian universities faces problems like trainees not understanding well, poor selection of trainees, and weak support for learning [45]. Ethiopia's 1994 Education and Training Policy aims for inclusion but doesn't do enough for SWD and relies too much on foreign donors, leading to inconsistent efforts for fairness [24]. Strong partnerships are also important for improving TVET and supporting SWD. In Kenya, ties between TVET schools and businesses could improve training, but problems like poor communication, cultural differences, and a lack of skilled staff make it hard [46]. In Malaysia, teamwork between schools, businesses, and communities is seen as important for preparing workers and helping graduates get jobs, but skill gaps remain a challenge [47]. Across Africa, disability policies have made some progress, but disability isn't fully included in all areas, and there aren't clear ways to measure success [48]. Education gets more focus for disability inclusion than other areas [49]. This review concludes that TVET schools around the world, especially in developing countries, face similar problems in fully including SWD. These include negative attitudes, lack of resources and accessible buildings, strict courses, and a gap between policies and what happens in reality. Leaders who use varied approaches and strong partnerships with businesses, governments, and disability groups are essential to overcoming these issues and creating truly inclusive and high-quality TVET systems.

6.4. Challenges and Barriers

The effectiveness of leadership and disability support systems in Ethiopian TVET institutions is impeded by several interconnected challenges, each with significant implications for inclusive education. These barriers, rooted in systemic, cultural, and resource-related issues, undermine the potential of TVET to empower PWDs and require targeted interventions to bridge the gap between policy and practice.

6.4.1. Policy-Implementation Gap

Despite Ethiopia's strong policy framework, including the Inclusive Education Strategy (2012) updated in 2022 and Ethiopian Education Development Roadmap (2018–2030), practical implementation remains limited due to resource constraints and weak coordination among stakeholders [35]. For instance, while policies mandate the establishment of DIET Resource Centres, only few percent of TVET institutions had fully operational centres by 2020, reflecting inadequate funding and oversight [24, 35, 36, 50]. This gap hinders the translation of legislative commitments into tangible outcomes, such as increased enrollment or improved access for PWDs, and underscores the need for stronger accountability mechanisms to ensure policy execution.

6.4.2. Limited Leadership Orientation

The predominance of structural leadership in Ethiopian TVET institutions, as identified by Kedida (33), focuses on organizational frameworks at the expense of human resource, political, or symbolic frames, limiting strategic partnerships and cultural transformation [32]. This orientation restricts leaders' ability to engage industries or communities effectively, which is critical for aligning training with market needs and fostering inclusive environments. For example, the lack of distributed or transformational leadership approaches hampers collaborative decision-making, leaving managers ill-equipped to address complex inclusion challenges, thus perpetuating systemic inefficiencies.

6.4.3. Weak TVET-Industry Linkages

Insufficient industry involvement results in curricula that fail to meet market demands, contributing to high graduate unemployment rates, with only 30% of TVET graduates securing employment within a year [35, 34]. This disconnect is particularly detrimental for PWDs, who require tailored training to enhance employability. The absence of employer input in curriculum design limits the development of relevant skills, such as adaptive technology use, and underscores the need for leadership to foster regional TVET-industry councils to bridge this gap.

6.4.4. Inadequate Infrastructure

Physical and technological barriers, such as the lack of ramps, modified facilities, and adaptive technologies, severely

restrict PWDs' access to TVET programs [24]. For instance, workshops often lack braille materials or wheelchair-accessible spaces, excluding students with visual or mobility impairments from practical training [35]. This infrastructural deficit not only limits participation but also reinforces perceptions of TVET as inaccessible, highlighting the urgency of allocating resources to accessibility upgrades to meet inclusive education goals.

6.4.5. Teacher Capacity Deficits

Limited training in inclusive pedagogies and negative attitudes among TVET educators impede effective teaching for PWDs [36]. The TECIP project revealed that only 15% of teachers are proficient in sign language, and many lack the skills or motivation to adapt teaching methods for diverse needs [27]. These deficits result in exclusionary practices, such as neglecting students with disabilities in practical sessions, and necessitate comprehensive professional development to equip educators with inclusive teaching strategies.

6.4.6. Societal Stigma

Misconceptions rooted in a medical model of disability, which views PWDs as needing to be "fixed" rather than accommodated, perpetuate exclusion and discrimination in Ethiopian TVET institutions [51]. Students report experiences of marginalization, which undermine their confidence and academic engagement [35]. This cultural barrier, prevalent in both urban and rural communities, requires leadership-driven awareness campaigns to shift perceptions toward a social model of disability, emphasizing inclusion and empowerment.

6.5. Strategies for Improvement

To address the identified challenges, several targeted strategies are proposed to enhance leadership and disability support systems in Ethiopian TVET institutions. These strategies leverage existing frameworks, such as Inclusive Education Resource Centers (IERCs) and international funding models, while aligning with Ethiopia's socio-economic realities to ensure feasibility and impact. Each strategy is designed to foster inclusive environments, strengthen institutional capacity, and empower PWDs through equitable access to skill training.

6.5.1. Enhance Teacher Training

Implementing a national training program through IERCs, focusing on inclusive pedagogies and sign language, is essential to address teacher capacity deficits [31, 49]. By targeting 80% of TVET educators by 2030, this initiative aims to equip teachers with skills to adapt teaching methods for diverse needs, such as using braille materials or visual aids for students with disabilities. The program's feasibility is supported by existing IERC infrastructure, which can host annual workshops, and its impact is expected to reduce exclusionary practices, as evidenced by global studies showing a 25% increase

in PWD engagement with trained educators [49]. Transformational leadership is critical to motivate educators and sustain commitment to inclusive teaching, ensuring long-term cultural change in TVET institutions.

6.5.2. Improve Infrastructure

Allocating 20% of TVET budgets to accessibility upgrades, such as ramps, modified toilets, and adaptive technologies, is a priority to overcome physical and technological barriers [31]. Leveraging funding models like the World Bank's General Education Quality Improvement Program for Equity (GEQIP-E), which expanded IERCs, ensures financial viability. This strategy addresses the exclusion of PWDs from practical training, as seen in cases where workshops lack wheelchair access [35]. By 2028, the goal is to make 50% of TVET facilities fully accessible, increasing PWD enrollment by an estimated 15%, based on South African models [6, 37]. Transactional leadership will be key to managing budget allocations and ensuring compliance with accessibility standards.

6.5.3. Strengthen Partnerships

Establishing regional TVET-industry councils to achieve 50% employer involvement in curriculum design by 2028 addresses weak industry linkages that contribute to graduate unemployment [34]. These councils, involving employers, NGOs, and government stakeholders, will align training with market needs, such as skills in adaptive technologies for PWDs. The approach draws on South Africa's success, where 40% of TVET programs are co-designed with employers, reducing unemployment by 20% [37]. Distributed leadership is essential to foster collaboration across stakeholders; ensuring curricula reflect industry demands while accommodating PWDs' unique needs, thus enhancing employability.

6.5.4. Foster Inclusive Cultures

Using benevolent leadership to implement awareness campaigns and student support groups can combat societal stigma rooted in a medical model of disability [12]. Campaigns, modeled on India's success in increasing PWD participation increase through community sensitization, will promote a social model of disability, emphasizing inclusion [53, 52]. Support groups will provide peer networks for PWDs, reducing experiences of bullying and boosting confidence, as reported by students [35]. This strategy is feasible through partnerships with local NGOs and requires transformational leadership to inspire cultural shifts, with an expected increase in PWD retention by 2030 [6].

6.5.5. Develop Monitoring Mechanisms

Creating a national dashboard to track PWD enrollment, graduation, and employment rates ensures data-driven policy adjustments, addressing the policy-implementation gap [35]. This tool, integrated into the Ethiopian Education Development Roadmap (2018–2030), will monitor metrics like the

low PWD enrollment rate, aiming for an increase by 2030 [24]. The dashboard's feasibility is supported by existing data systems in IERCs, and its impact will enhance accountability [50]. Transactional leadership will ensure consistent data collection and reporting, strengthening [33, 10].

6.6. Research Gaps

A critical observation from the literature is the limited direct research specifically addressing "TVET-inclusive education", as opposed to broader inclusive education or special education context [4, 37, 55, 54]. Furthermore, while studies highlight challenges, there is limited published material on the true voices and experiences of learners with disabilities in TVET institutions, particularly in developing countries [14, 19, 38]. This gap points to a need for more participatory research approaches that center the perspectives of students with disabilities to inform policy and practice [56]. While international models and comparative analyses offer valuable insights, the unique historical and socio-economic contexts of countries like Ethiopia mean that imported policies require careful contextualization and adaptation [4]. The issue of societal attitudes and their impact on inclusion also requires deeper exploration and targeted interventions beyond just policy changes [4, 3]. The emphasis on e-learning and digital transformation presents new opportunities but also new challenges for accessibility, necessitating proactive leadership in technology integration [1, 57]. In Ethiopia, limited Studies on Leadership Orientation's Impact Research exploring how specific leadership orientations, such as transformational or distributed approaches, directly influence institutional outcomes and graduate employability in Ethiopian TVET contexts remains scarce [32, 33, 58]. While Kedida (33) identifies a reliance on structural leadership that limits industry partnerships, and Mesfin and van Niekerk (34) highlight deficiencies in strategic engagement with stakeholders, neither study explicitly examines how leadership could enhance disability-specific outcomes, such as increased PWD enrollment or teacher motivation. Similarly, Keder and Geleta (57) note that leadership practices in Ethiopian TVET often fail to prioritize inclusive resource allocation, leaving gaps in understanding how leadership styles impact accessibility and employability. This lack

of evidence hinders the development of targeted leadership training programs. For instance, understanding whether leadership increases industry collaboration or reduces the employment rate for PWD graduates could guide interventions to improve inclusive practices [35]. Few Investigations into PWDs' Lived Experiences Research on the lived experiences of PWDs in Ethiopian TVET is limited, with few qualitative studies capturing their perspectives on barriers like discrimination or inaccessible facilities [24]. Mergia's (36) study, which documented bullying and exclusion, represents a rare insight, yet broader participatory research is needed to amplify student voices. For example, students with visual impairments have reported a lack of braille materials, rendering practical training inaccessible [35]. This gap restricts the ability to design student-centered interventions, such as peer support groups or adaptive teaching methods that address specific challenges. Expanded qualitative studies and mixed approach could inform culturally relevant strategies to enhance retention and engagement, particularly in rural settings where stigma is pronounced and PWD enrollment remains low [24].

7. Conclusion

Effective leadership is undeniably central to the successful implementation of disability support systems and inclusive education in TVET institutions worldwide. While a strong policy foundation exists, in Ethiopia, the persistent challenges related to inadequate training, insufficient infrastructure, funding constraints, and prevalent negative attitudes underscore a critical gap between policy and practice. The Full Range Leadership Model offers a useful framework for leaders to develop and apply a balanced approach, prioritizing transformational and transactional leadership to inspire change, foster collaborative environments, and ensure the consistent delivery of support services. Moving forward, empirical research needs to increasingly focus on the lived experiences of students with disabilities within TVET contexts and explore how leadership practices can be more effectively tailored to address these specific needs, ensuring equitable access, progression, and success for all.

Abbreviations

TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
PWDs	People with disabilities
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNEVOC	UNESCO International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training
ILO	International Labour Organization
UNCPRD / CRPD	United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
MoE	Ministry of Education (Ethiopia)
MoSHE	Ministry of Science and Higher Education (Ethiopia)
GEQIP-E	General Education Quality Improvement Program for Equity
IERC(s)	Inclusive Education Resource Center(s)

DIET	Disability-Inclusive Education and Training
FDRE	Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia
NGO(s)	Non-Governmental Organization(s)
ICTeD	International Conference on TVET Excellence & Development
TECIP	Teacher Educators in Higher Education as Catalysts for Inclusive Practices
ECDD	Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development
AU	African Union
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
PhD	Doctor of Philosophy
SJ	Social Justice (as used in Socially Just Leadership)
HRD	Human Resource Development (implied in leadership and training discussions)

Author Contributions

Tesmamu Mirre Jobir: Conceptualization, Methodology, Investigation, Data curation, Writing – original draft

Tadesse Regassa: Methodology, Writing – review and editing

Desalegn Beyene: Supervision, Writing – review and editing

Conflicts of Interest

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