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ENHANCING THE PARTICIPATION OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES IN VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION: EVIDENCE FROM TECHNICAL COLLEGES IN SOKOTO STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The study examined strategies for enhancing the participation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in vocational and technical education programs in technical colleges in Sokoto State. Descriptive survey research design was adopted, with a population of 58 respondents comprising 28 students with disabilities and 30 technical trades teachers, selected from technical colleges in Binji, Farfaru, Runjin Sambo, and Bafarawa, covering the 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 academic sessions. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled the Disabled Students and Technical Teachers Questionnaire (DISATTEQ), which was validated by experts for face and content validity and demonstrated a Cronbach's Alpha reliability of 0.75. Data were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, and t-test. The results indicated minimal societal concern for the educational needs of persons with disabilities, a lack of specialized training materials in technical colleges, and limited research attention to special education to enhance its effectiveness. Furthermore, the study revealed the absence of enlightenment and awareness programs aimed at educating PWDs and society at large about their significance. Based on these findings, it was recommended that society and families should actively promote the development of vocational and technical skills among PWDs through rehabilitation programs, while financial assistance should be increased to provide more training and development materials and to implement programs that sustain continuous awareness about persons with disabilities.

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INTRODUCTION

Vocational and Technical Education (VTE) has been recognized as a vital factor in national development due to its role in enhancing human capacity, productivity, and overall economic growth. Despite global advances, the enrollment and participation of persons with disabilities remain extremely low, even in the presence of decades of policies and commitments from governments and various

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stakeholders. This disparity highlights the persistent gap between policy formulation and the actual implementation of strategies for inclusive VTE, particularly in developing contexts (Akpan & Isa, 2019). Essentially, VTE is a learning process through which individuals acquire practical skills, technical knowledge, and work competencies for specific trades, occupations, or professions within their chosen environments.

Globally, several strategies have been adopted to foster the inclusive participation of persons with disabilities in VTE, including enhancing infrastructure, focusing on teacher education and training, adapting teaching methods, and making learning materials accessible. This paper examines how countries such as Germany, Canada, and Australia have addressed the challenge of exclusion with notable success through inclusive Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) systems. These countries have worked to remove physical, instructional, and institutional barriers that previously limited full participation. Where financial, technical, and policy support is consistent, individuals with disabilities can benefit from TVET institutions, transition effectively into work environments, and contribute productively. Experiences from around the world suggest that exclusion is not inevitable but often results from poor planning, weak implementation, and policy neglect, as observed in contexts like Nigeria (Canton, 2021; Citaristi, 2022).

Persons with disabilities are a critical target group within inclusive VTE. Individuals with physical, sensory, intellectual, and learning impairments face significant challenges in accessing education and employment opportunities. Theoretically, they should enjoy equal access to technical colleges, and programs should promote skill development, independence, and social participation. In practice, however, participation remains severely constrained. Barriers include inadequate accessible facilities, a lack of assistive technologies, insufficient instructional adaptations, and a shortage of teachers trained in inclusive education practices (Bani Odeh & Lach, 2024). Akanbi (2017) and Nwamara and Nwakacha (2025) further emphasize that support for learners with disabilities, including marginalized groups, in skill development is still weak in implementation. This systemic failure limits meaningful participation, fostering social exclusion rather than promoting self-reliance.

In Sokoto State, poor infrastructure, underfunding, and an acute shortage of trained personnel further exacerbate the challenges faced by persons with disabilities in accessing and benefiting from vocational and technical programs. Participation encompasses not only enrollment but also sustained access, engagement, retention, and successful completion. Yet, students with disabilities are often marginalized across all stages, including distance education. The persistent gap between policy rhetoric and actual practice raises questions about institutional accountability and the effectiveness of inclusive education policies (Adigun & Ogunsola, 2025). Consequently, inclusion within Nigeria's technical education system remains aspirational rather than fully operational, leaving the transformative potential of VTE largely untapped for persons with disabilities.

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VTE is intended as a pathway for developing practical skills, technical competence, and employability to promote self-reliance and national development. Its skills-based nature makes it a potentially transformational route for individuals with disabilities, providing opportunities for economic self-sufficiency and social integration. When accessible and responsive to diverse learner needs, including those of students with disabilities, vocational education can develop productive and competent workers (Elizabeth & Adewunmi, 2023). In contrast, vocational education programs in Nigeria still do not adequately respond to the needs of students with disabilities (Adigun, 2018).

Technical education, a key component of VTE, encompasses the scientific, technological, and practical knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for entry into technical trades and for technological development. Technical colleges, Nigeria's primary centers for VTE, should serve as inclusive learning environments. However, studies indicate that these institutions remain largely inaccessible due to barriers such as inaccessible workshops, insufficient assistive technologies, inadequate instructional modifications, and poorly prepared teachers. Although policy provisions emphasize equity and inclusion, actual implementation remains weak, creating a gap between policy goals and institutional practice. This gap is particularly evident in Sokoto State, where poor infrastructure, inadequate funding, and a shortage of trained teachers further limit participation. While partnerships with non-governmental organizations, development partners, and international agencies like UNESCO help build awareness and capacity, they have yet to effect substantial change.

Disability should not preclude the right to education. The ongoing marginalization of individuals with physical, sensory, intellectual, and learning impairments reflects a broader failure to uphold equity and social justice in education. This underscores the need to examine the challenges persons with disabilities face within VTE in Sokoto State and to identify effective strategies to enhance their participation and bridge the gap between policy intentions and actual practice.

Statement of the Problem

Vocational and Technical Education is essential for developing skills, fostering autonomy, and enhancing employability for all students, including those with disabilities. Ideally, learning environments should be inclusive, supported by accessible infrastructure, assistive technologies, qualified personnel, integrated curricula, and a society that encourages participation. In such contexts, students with disabilities can fully engage in education, acquire essential skills, secure employment, and contribute meaningfully to social and economic development, reflecting the principles of equity and inclusivity.

In Sokoto State, however, students with disabilities continue to face systemic challenges that hinder their participation in technical colleges. Enrollment rates remain low despite the recognized importance of vocational and technical education. Barriers such as inadequate infrastructure, limited access to assistive

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devices, insufficiently trained instructors, societal biases, and curricula that do not fully integrate inclusive approaches significantly restrict their access and engagement. As a result, students with disabilities are at a higher risk of unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion. Furthermore, there is a notable lack of empirical research examining these challenges specifically within Sokoto State, underscoring the need for targeted studies to inform policy and practice.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were to:

1. identify the factors that hinder the participation of persons with disabilities in vocational and technical education in technical colleges in Sokoto State.

2. examine the strategies that can enhance the participation of persons with disabilities in vocational and technical education in technical colleges in Sokoto State.

3. determine the vocational and technical trades that are most suitable for persons with disabilities in vocational and technical education programs in technical colleges in Sokoto State.

Research Questions

To achieve the above objectives, the study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What challenges hinder the participation of persons with disabilities in vocational and technical education in technical colleges in Sokoto State?

2. What strategies can be implemented to enhance the participation of persons with disabilities in vocational and technical education in technical colleges in Sokoto State?

3. Which vocational and technical trades are most suitable for persons with disabilities in vocational and technical education programs in technical colleges in Sokoto State?

Hypothesis

Based on the research questions, the study tested the following hypothesis:

- There is no significant difference in the mean responses of technical teachers and persons with disabilities regarding the participation of persons with disabilities in vocational and technical education in technical colleges in Sokoto State.

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Methodology

Design of the Study

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. A survey research design is a systematic approach used to collect information to describe and characterize a phenomenon, population, or situation. It is particularly effective for addressing questions of what, when, where, and how, rather than why (Siedlecki, 2020). The design was considered appropriate for this study because it enabled the researchers to obtain information directly from technical trade teachers and persons with disabilities regarding their participation in vocational and technical education in technical colleges in Sokoto State.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in Sokoto State, Nigeria, focusing on selected government technical colleges in Binji Local Government, Farfaru Area in Sokoto, Runjin Sambo Area in Sokoto, and Bafarawa town in Isa Local Government, all within Sokoto State. Sokoto State was selected due to the observed challenges in implementing inclusive vocational and technical education for persons with disabilities, making it an appropriate context for investigating the barriers to participation and identifying strategies for improvement.

Population and Sample of the Study

The population for this study consisted of 58 individuals, including 30 technical trade teachers and 28 students with disabilities, drawn from selected technical colleges in Sokoto State during the 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 academic sessions. A census approach was employed, as all members of the population were included in the study.

Instrument for Data Collection

Data for the study were collected using a structured questionnaire titled Disabled Students and Technical Teachers Questionnaire (DISATTEQ). The instrument was divided into two parts. Part one consisted of demographic information, while part two contained items designed to address the research questions. A four-point Likert scale was used, coded as Strongly Agree (SA = 4), Agree (A = 3), Disagree (D = 2), and Strongly Disagree (SD = 1), to facilitate accurate and valid data collection.

Validation of the Instrument

The questionnaire was subjected to face validation by three experts from the School of Technical Education, Federal College of Education (Technical), Gusau, Zamfara State. Feedback from the experts was incorporated into the final draft to ensure clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of the items.

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Reliability of the Instrument

The instrument was pilot-tested on five technical teachers and five persons with disabilities from Government Science Technical College, Hadejia, Jigawa State. Reliability was determined using the Cronbach alpha method, which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.70. This coefficient exceeds the acceptable threshold, confirming that the instrument was reliable for data collection.

Method of Data Collection

The questionnaire was administered directly to all 58 respondents with the assistance of trained research aides familiar with the study area. Respondents were given instructions on how to complete the questionnaire, and all administered copies were successfully retrieved, representing a 100 percent return rate.

Method of Data Analysis

Data collected from the study were analyzed using mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions, and an independent samples t-test to test the null hypothesis. A decision rule of 2.50 was adopted, where any item with a mean of 2.50 or above was considered accepted, and items below 2.50 were considered rejected. This analysis enabled the identification of key trends regarding the participation of persons with disabilities in vocational and technical education.

Results

Research Question 1: What challenges hinder the participation of persons with disabilities in vocational and technical education in technical colleges in Sokoto State?

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Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents' Ratings on Challenges Hindering the Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Vocational and Technical Education

S/N	Challenges of PWDs in VTE	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Negative societal attitudes discourage the participation of persons with disabilities in vocational and technical education.	3.12	1.31	Accepted
2	Vocational and technical education programs are perceived as unsuitable for students with disabilities.	3.13	.57	Accepted
3	There are inadequate vocational and technical teachers trained to teach students with disabilities in the school.	3.68	.70	Accepted
4	Specialized instructional materials for students with disabilities are not available in the school.	3.60	.69	Accepted
5	Students with disabilities find it difficult to learn and practice vocational and technical skills.	3.56	.77	Accepted
6	The school environment is not conducive to the learning needs of students with disabilities.	3.70	.74	Accepted
7	There are insufficient special education textbooks and learning resources for training students with disabilities.	3.67	.98	Accepted
8	School facilities and buildings are not physically accessible to students with disabilities.	3.63	1.00	Accepted
9	There is no functional support or disability services office for students with disabilities in the school.	3.68	.99	Accepted
10	The school does not provide transportation or mobility support for students with disabilities.	3.84	.79	Accepted
11	Students with disabilities do not receive adequate career and academic counseling services.	3.84	.89	Accepted
12	Teachers do not provide sufficient individual attention to students with disabilities during instruction.	3.75	.82	Accepted
13	Students with disabilities do not participate equally in extracurricular and non-academic school activities.	3.70	.79	Accepted
14	Students with disabilities are not treated equally by teachers and other school staff.	3.43	.84	Accepted
15	Vocational and technical workshops and laboratories are not disability-friendly or safe for students with disabilities.	3.56	.81	Accepted

The results presented in Table 1 show that all the listed items recorded mean values above the criterion mean of 2.50, indicating that respondents agreed that these factors hinder the participation of persons with disabilities in vocational and technical education. The findings reveal that negative societal attitudes, inadequate trained teachers, lack of specialized instructional materials, inaccessible school facilities, absence of functional support services, insufficient counseling and mobility support, and

unfriendly workshop environments constitute major challenges confronting students with disabilities. The relatively moderate standard deviation values further indicate that respondents' opinions were closely related, showing general consensus on the challenges affecting the participation of persons with disabilities in vocational and technical education.

Research Question 2: What strategies can be employed to enhance the participation of persons with disabilities in vocational and technical education in technical colleges in Sokoto State?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents' Ratings on Strategies for Enhancing the Participation of Persons with Disabilities in Vocational and Technical Education

S/N	Strategies to enhance the participation of PWDs	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Government should provide free education for persons with disabilities at all levels of education.	3.50	.75	Accepted
2	Persons with disabilities should be introduced to early childhood education programs to support early development.	3.34	.92	Accepted
3	Vocational and technical colleges should be established or adapted specifically to meet the needs of persons with disabilities.	3.39	.89	Accepted
4	Parents should actively support the education of their children with disabilities through moral and financial assistance.	3.43	.88	Accepted
5	Proper vocational guidance should be provided to persons with disabilities to enable them to choose courses that match their interests and abilities.	3.48	.75	Accepted
6	Employment opportunities should be guaranteed for persons with disabilities immediately after graduation in both public and private organizations.	3.34	.92	Accepted
7	Soft loan schemes should be provided to persons with disabilities after graduation to enhance self-reliance and entrepreneurship.	3.48	.92	Accepted
8	Specialized colleges of education (technical) for persons with disabilities should be established.	3.48	.80	Accepted
9	Enlightenment programs should be organized to educate persons with disabilities on their roles and contributions in society.	3.68	.84	Accepted
10	Positive societal attitudes toward persons with disabilities should be promoted to enhance their participation in vocational and technical education.	3.24	.90	Accepted
11	Societal encouragement should be strengthened to improve the academic performance of students with disabilities.	2.79	.48	Accepted

12	Counseling and psychological support services should be provided to improve the academic performance of students with disabilities.	3.29	.87	Accepted
13	The physical and instructional environments of vocational and technical schools should be designed to meet the needs of persons with disabilities.	3.53	.65	Accepted
14	Students with disabilities should receive financial support or scholarships from government, society, and non-governmental organizations.	3.51	.70	Accepted
15	School authorities should prioritize students with disabilities in stipend and welfare support programs.	3.25	.78	Accepted

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that all the proposed strategies for enhancing the participation of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in vocational and technical education (VTE) were accepted by the respondents. This is evident from the fact that all the items recorded mean values above the criterion mean of 2.50, with mean scores ranging from 2.79 to 3.68. This finding suggests that respondents generally agreed that measures such as provision of free education, early childhood intervention, establishment of specialized or adapted technical colleges, vocational guidance, financial and scholarship support, counseling services, and the promotion of positive societal attitudes are effective strategies for improving the participation of PWDs in VTE programs in technical colleges in Sokoto State. Furthermore, the standard deviation values, which ranged between 0.48 and 0.92, indicate that the respondents' opinions were relatively consistent and clustered closely around the mean.

Research Question 3: Which vocational and technical trades are most suitable for persons with disabilities in vocational and technical education programs in technical colleges in Sokoto State?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Respondents' Ratings on Suitable Vocational and Technical Trades for Persons with Disabilities

S/N	VTE trades suitable for PWDs	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Electrical installation trades are suitable for persons with disabilities with appropriate instructional adaptations.	3.34	1.00	Accepted
2	Carpentry and joinery trades can be adapted to suit the abilities of persons with disabilities.	2.98	.78	Accepted
3	Welding and fabrication trades are suitable for persons with disabilities when safety measures and adaptive tools are provided.	3.20	1.03	Accepted
4	Computer and information technology–related trades are suitable for persons with disabilities.	3.24	.97	Accepted

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5	Tailoring and fashion design trades are suitable for persons with disabilities due to their flexible skill requirements.	3.25	.92	Accepted
6	Plumbing and pipe-fitting trades can be suitable for persons with disabilities with appropriate task modification.	3.36	.98	Accepted
7	Painting and decoration trades are suitable for persons with disabilities in vocational and technical education programs.	3.43	.95	Accepted
8	Automobile mechanics trades are suitable for persons with disabilities with proper workshop adaptations.	3.58	.75	Accepted
9	Building construction trades are suitable for persons with disabilities when instructional methods are individualized.	3.67	.73	Accepted
10	Leather works and shoe-making trades are suitable for persons with disabilities.	2.81	.92	Accepted
11	Refrigeration and air-conditioning trades are suitable for persons with disabilities with appropriate assistive devices.	3.20	.76	Accepted
12	Craft-based trades such as bead making and ceramics are suitable for persons with disabilities.	2.62	1.28	Accepted
13	Agricultural-based vocational trades are suitable for persons with disabilities with modified tools and methods.	3.24	.65	Accepted
14	Printing and graphic design trades are suitable for persons with disabilities.	3.27	.66	Accepted
15	Catering and food processing trades are suitable for persons with disabilities in technical colleges.	3.43	.65	Accepted

The results in Table 3 show that respondents agreed that all the listed vocational and technical trades are suitable for persons with disabilities when appropriate instructional adaptations, safety measures, and assistive devices are provided. This is evidenced by the fact that all the items recorded mean values above the cutoff point of 2.50, with mean scores ranging from 2.62 to 3.67. Trades such as building construction, automobile mechanics, painting and decoration, catering and food processing, electrical installation, computer and information technology, and tailoring were particularly rated high, indicating strong agreement on their suitability for PWDs. The standard deviation values ranged between 0.65 and 1.28, suggesting that respondents' views did not differ widely and that there was general consensus regarding the suitability of these vocational and technical trades for persons with disabilities in VTE programs.

Null Hypothesis: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of teachers and disabled students regarding the participation of persons with disabilities in vocational and technical education in technical colleges

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Table 4: Independent Samples t-Test of Mean Responses of Technical Teachers and Persons with Disabilities on Participation in Vocational and Technical Education

Respondent Group	N	Mean	SD	Df	T-cal	F	Sig	Decision
Technical Teachers	30	3.41	0.89	56	0.518	0.214	0.645	NS
Persons with Disabilities	28	3.36	0.90					

The results in Table 4 reveal that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of technical teachers and persons with disabilities regarding the participation of PWDs in vocational and technical education in technical colleges. This is shown by the calculated significance value of 0.645, which is greater than the 0.05 level of significance. Consequently, the null hypothesis was accepted. This implies that both technical teachers and persons with disabilities held similar views concerning the participation of PWDs in vocational and technical education, indicating a shared understanding of the challenges and participation-related issues within technical colleges in Sokoto State.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study reveal that multiple barriers significantly restrict the participation of persons with disabilities in vocational and technical education in technical colleges in Sokoto State. The major challenges identified include negative societal attitudes toward persons with disabilities, an inadequate number of vocational and technical teachers trained in special needs education, lack of specialized instructional materials, physical inaccessibility of school facilities, absence of functional support and disability services, as well as insufficient counseling and mobility support. Collectively, these factors suggest that the learning environment in many technical colleges is largely inadequate in meeting the educational needs of persons with disabilities. These findings are consistent with those of Elizabeth and Adewunmi (2023), who reported that infrastructural barriers, shortages of trained personnel, and negative societal perceptions significantly limit the enrollment and participation of persons with disabilities in vocational and technical education. Similarly, Ogoe, Howard, and Appiah (2023) found that inadequate learning resources and weak institutional support negatively affect the participation and performance of students with disabilities in skill oriented programs.

The study further established that respondents strongly endorsed several strategies aimed at enhancing the participation of persons with disabilities in vocational and technical education in Sokoto State. These strategies include the provision of free education, establishment of specialized or adapted technical colleges, effective vocational guidance, financial and scholarship support, counseling and psychological services, promotion of positive societal attitudes, and the improvement of physical and instructional learning environments. These findings align with Abubakar (2024), who emphasized the importance of

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inclusive policies, financial support mechanisms, accessible infrastructure, and conducive learning environments in expanding educational access for persons with disabilities. In addition, Mukami et al. (2024) stressed the need for sustained public awareness and the implementation of concrete governmental and institutional measures to address the persistent barriers faced by persons with disabilities.

Furthermore, the study revealed that respondents agreed that a wide range of vocational and technical trades are suitable for persons with disabilities when appropriate adaptations are provided. Such trades include electrical installation, computer and information technology, tailoring and fashion design, automobile mechanics, building construction, and craft based occupations. This finding supports the views of Philips and Awujoola (2024), who observed that persons with disabilities are capable of acquiring vocational and technical skills when training programs are adapted to their abilities and supported with assistive technologies. The findings also corroborate Fareo (2020), who argued that disability should not be regarded as a limitation to skill acquisition but rather as a condition that necessitates instructional modification and supportive learning environments. Finally, the t test analysis indicated no significant difference in the mean responses of technical teachers and persons with disabilities regarding participation in vocational and technical education in Sokoto State, suggesting a shared perception of the challenges and opportunities associated with inclusive vocational and technical education.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that several factors significantly contribute to the low participation of persons with disabilities in vocational and technical education in technical colleges in Sokoto State. The findings further indicate a strong level of agreement among respondents regarding the effectiveness of various strategies aimed at improving participation, and they confirm that most vocational and technical trades can be made accessible to persons with disabilities when appropriate modifications are implemented. The study therefore underscores that limited participation is largely attributable to prevailing institutional, infrastructural, and societal constraints, which must be addressed through deliberate policies and targeted initiatives to ensure meaningful engagement of persons with disabilities in skill acquisition and vocational development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made for policy and practice:

1. Government and educational administrators should implement continuous training and retraining programmes for vocational and technical teachers on inclusive education practices. Such training should focus on disability awareness, effective instructional strategies for teaching students with

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disabilities, and the use of assistive technologies to enhance teachers' competence and confidence in handling learners with diverse needs.

2. Administrators of technical colleges in Sokoto State should improve and modify existing infrastructure to ensure accessibility for persons with disabilities. This should include the provision of ramps, accessible workshops and laboratory spaces, adapted equipment, and disability-friendly learning environments that support active participation in vocational and technical education.
3. The Ministries of Education and relevant stakeholders should collaborate to ensure the recruitment and deployment of adequately trained special and vocational education teachers in technical colleges. Partnerships with special education professionals and inclusive education experts should also be strengthened to improve instructional quality and student support services for persons with disabilities.
4. Government and school authorities should establish functional disability support or special needs units within technical colleges. These units should provide counseling services, academic support, mobility assistance, and career guidance to students with disabilities, thereby enhancing retention, completion rates, and successful transition into employment.
5. Parents, community groups, and non-governmental organizations should be encouraged to provide sustained moral, financial, and psychosocial support to persons with disabilities. Increased advocacy and

6. awareness programmes are necessary to promote positive societal attitudes and reduce stigma that may hinder participation in vocational and technical education.
7. Government and its agencies should develop and implement financial assistance schemes such as scholarships, stipends, allowances, and soft loan facilities for students with disabilities enrolled in vocational and technical programmes. Such support will improve access to training opportunities, reduce dropout rates, and promote self-reliance and smooth transition from training to employment or entrepreneurship.

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