EDITORIAL

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This issue of JOVACET is its 11th since the journal was established in November 2017 and since its first publication in 2018 (there were two special issues: one in 2019 and another in 2024). Our next year, 2027, therefore, is an important milestone, marking the first decade of *JOVACET*. Compared with one of our sister journals, the *JVET* in the United Kingdom, which is approaching 80 years, *JOVACET* is very young, but it holds a critical space for TVET (technical and vocational education and training) in the south and on the African continent. We are hopeful that it will be nurtured and sustained well into the future.

In this volume 9(1) (2026), we see a range of what would seem to be fairly diverse themes in vocational education and training. On closer inspection, however, the interdependence of the issues that have been interrogated by our authors becomes clearer. For instance, TVET pedagogies often depend on what is available to vocational teachers and students: whether in the form of infrastructure, equipment, materials in print or digital format (the latter becoming more prominent in recent times) or simply an environment that is conducive to achieving curricula and policy objectives. As can be gleaned from the brief overview of our articles that follows, there is ample illustration of the many intersections among the purposes, policies and practices of TVET across contexts.

We begin with Zungu and Hugo's (2026) comparative case study of three TVET colleges that investigated whether, and how, colleges utilised the technology that was available to them on the campus. While the necessary infrastructure was physically present, the study showed that digital utilisation could not be inferred from the presence of infrastructure, from an existing policy or from a platform in place. Across the three colleges, the technology only became employed in teaching practice when three conditions were in concert: technical reliability (dependable networks, support staff), institutional ownership (an office with authority and resources for implementation of the tools) and curricular compulsion (the willingness of students and lecturers to integrate the technology into teaching and learning). Without one or the other of these conditions being present in the institution, utilisation of the technology

stalled. Of course, unequal student access to devices, connectivity and data presented a further limitation in the form of social circumstances that could not be overcome by the colleges.

Continuing the theme of digital resources, Makandwa, Zisengwe, Makonya and Nangi (2026) explored institutional readiness for online formative assessments in Zimbabwean vocational training centres, specifically with regard to inclusive access and adaptations for student diversity in Tourism and Hospitality training programmes. As found in other studies in developing contexts, while urban-based students reported relatively easy access to Internet-enabled devices and stable Internet connectivity, their rural counterparts faced significant challenges. Limited access to reliable electricity, high mobile-data costs and lack of technological devices hindered students from participating fully in remote learning. Female students, in particular, reported lower engagement rates in online assessments, attributed primarily to competing domestic obligations arising from childcare responsibilities, household management duties and expectations of women within family structures. These findings illuminate again how traditional gender roles create new forms of gendered educational inequality.

On the theme of inclusivity, Mdiza, Mathebula, Nyewe and Chigona's article presents a closer look at how a Western Cape college is faring with regard to accommodating students with disabilities despite rising enrolment of such students at TVET colleges. In a small, targeted study of purposively selected students with a variety of disabilities, it was disheartening to note that, so many years after education policy attempts at inclusivity, there are still inaccessible buildings and learning materials, limited classroom affordance and non-inclusive teaching practices, especially for those with hearing and visual impairments. TVET students with disabilities had to deal not only with their individual impairment, but also with the interconnected institutional, environmental and systemic factors. Several participants said they were reluctant to disclose their disabilities because of fear of discrimination, stigmatisation or breaches of confidentiality. Those who chose to disclose their disability reported receiving little or no institutional follow-up or appropriate support. It would appear there is still work to be done in terms of embedding inclusive practices across diverse TVET settings.

On the topic of vocational pedagogies and educator approaches to teaching and learning, three articles take us to the classroom coalface and curriculum development. First, Kammeyer and Zinn explored the adoption of experimentation and discovery-based teaching methods in Engineering education among German and South African TVET lecturers in a comparative study. Findings were that the majority of South African and German TVET lecturers could incorporate technical experiments into their teaching, but this knowledge had been obtained mainly outside formal teacher training. The use of experiments, however, depended largely on available resources such as materials, personal experience and institutional conditions such as class size and time-tabling. Despite higher academic qualifications than their SA counterparts, German lecturers also had not dealt with conducting technical experiments during their teacher training programmes.

This exploratory research indicated that, while technical experiments are regarded as important by TVET lecturers, the availability of materials and lecturer competence were barriers to their systematic application, thus potentially depriving students of effective learning methodologies in technical education.

In the second article on teaching applications, our authors Zwane, Ramorola and Sibanda (2026) foreground the importance of visual literacy (VL) as an essential skill for students entering dynamic and complex workplaces and they explore how multimodal instruction can provide opportunities for visual literacy learning among TVET students in English First Additional Language (EFAL) classrooms. They found the teaching of visual texts to be fragmented and superficial, rather than a systematic and theoretically informed component of EFAL pedagogy in the TVET context. As a result, students showed significant difficulty in interpreting verbal and non-verbal cues in body language and facial expressions, with little pedagogical practice being offered. Through a structured intervention of relevant materials development for teaching VL, the researchers found notable improvement in teaching and learning approaches by both lecturers and students when multimodal texts were utilised. Structured VL tools enabled students to engage more confidently with complex visual texts, supporting both their interpretive skills and their ability to produce meaning across modes. These approaches scaffolded learning, fostered collaboration and critical thinking, and increased motivation.

The third instance of curriculum-related research intertwines educator agency, collaborative learning and learning for sustainability in a secondary document analysis undertaken by De Souza (2026). This study examined how educator-led 'change projects' enacted Education for Sustainable Development in selected TVET institutions in Botswana, Namibia and Zimbabwe. The wide-ranging projects addressed training in entrepreneurship, community-service learning, engineering redesign, repair cafés, information and communications technology-supported teaching, industrial attachment through beekeeping and water management engineering. Analysis across seven cases in the report revealed three pedagogical orientations: participatory and community-engaged learning, curriculum innovation for sustainability, and experiential, practice-based learning. Educator agency was found to be an interpretive and collaborative process through which ESD could be addressed pedagogically, in that collaborative professional learning informed pedagogical judgement and supported local curriculum and assessment innovation.

Our final two articles in this issue are aimed at structural issues in TVET that have been subject to ongoing scrutiny and surfacing from time to time. The first of these two deals with work-based learning (WBL), also referred to as work-based experience (WBE), which has long been a source of frustration for students and lecturers alike, notwithstanding the length and breadth of research that emphasise its importance in vocational education. Engelbrecht and Garraway (2026) conducted research among TVET college lecturers to uncover restrictive practices at the micro level which impede the implementation of work-based experience in the college tourism programme (as opposed to the macro level where the impediments to

student placement in industry are more familiar). At the micro level, lecturers argued for their inclusion in college engagement with industry, not least so that they could advocate for their graduates in the industry, but also to assist employers to understand the nature of the college tourism qualification. The researchers hold that addressing big-picture, macro-level restrictive practices is insufficient when internal micro-level barriers continue to impede effective WBE implementation.

Last but certainly not least, Desai (2026) takes up the TVET 'supply vs demand' debate in terms of South Africa's student enrolment targets set in official policy. Showing a 2025/26 college headcount enrolment still well below the state's National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 target, the article argues that the binding constraint on enrolment is a supply- rather than demand-side failure, the latter being the more popular argument based on TVET college attractiveness and so on. In a structured analysis of publicly available secondary data, the author constructs a conceptual model that identifies three primary domains influencing TVET enrolment. While demand-side factors are significant, the evidence suggests that the major constraint is supply-side: enrolment capping driven by funding limitations, lecturer vacancies and institutional capacity deficits that prevent the TVET system from absorbing the latent demand that exists. These supply-side constraints generate demand-side effects through the feedback mechanisms identified in the model. While the strategies proposed are not new, for example lifting enrolment caps, expanding NSFAS (National Student Financial Aid Scheme) capacity, professionalising TVET lecturers and managing the QCTO (*Quality Council for Trades and Occupations)* qualification transition, the systems perspective embedded in the conceptual model highlights the need for a coordinated, multipronged approach rather than ad hoc interventions.

That's it, folks, for 2026. We hope that you find value in these pages and that you will be encouraged and inspired to submit your articles to *JOVACET*. Thank you to our authors who entrust us with their research efforts, our tough but fair reviewers who keep our journal on track, and you, our loyal readership. Let's continue to ask the hard TVET questions and to celebrate the role that our journal plays in ensuring that we all participate in thinking about the answers. We look forward to your submissions for our 10th year of publication in 2027. Thank you one and all!