

# Journal of Vocational, Adult and Continuing Education and Training



**JOVACET**  
Journal of Vocational, Adult and Continuing Education and Training

**VOLUME**

**Issue 1 2018**

**1**

Journal of Vocational, Adult and Continuing  
Education and Training



## Message of Support from Mrs GNM Pandor, Minister of Higher Education and Training

Internationally there is a scarcity of peer-reviewed academic publications that are specifically intended to promote and disseminate scholarly research into post-school TVET and Adult and Continuing Education and Training.

The first edition of the *Journal of Vocational, Adult and Continuing Education and Training* and its focus on the African continent and the global South is thus timely and most welcome.

The enormous importance of the TVET, Adult and Continuing Education sector to the social and economic wellbeing of our people is not disputed. However, there has been an absence of a credible and quality publication to promote scholarly debate in the field. I am hopeful that this *Journal of Vocational, Adult and Continuing Education and Training* will provide such a platform for the theoretical and conceptual understanding of this sector. I hope also that the Journal will provide a platform for a rigorous and sound analysis of the implementation of the analyses of the scholars that will be published in the Journal.

I welcome the first edition of the *Journal of Vocational, Adult and Continuing Education and Training* and look forward to the interdisciplinary and globally comparative publications that will assist policy-makers, practitioners, researchers and scholars to contribute to and enhance the understanding of this important sector.

Congratulations to the Institute for Post-School Studies at the University of the Western Cape and your partners on this milestone.

I wish you, your contributors and your readers every success in this first edition and continued strength in the years ahead.

**Mrs GNM Pandor MP**  
*Minister of Higher Education and Training*



Co-funded by the European Union



This publication was produced with support from the Teaching and Learning Development Capacity Improvement Programme, a partnership programme between the Department of Higher Education and Training and the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department or the European Union.

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# **Journal of Vocational, Adult and Continuing Education and Training**

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**Volume 1, Issue 1  
2018**

## **The Journal of Vocational, Adult and Continuing Education and Training**

The Journal of Vocational, Adult and Continuing Education and Training (JOVACET) recognises the need for critical engagement through studies in technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and adult and continuing education and training, and for encouraging critical scrutiny of this expansive knowledge area on the African continent.

The voices and experiences of practitioners, reflecting on all aspects of teaching and learning within vocational education and adult education settings, should be heard through the publication of empirical and robust research. While the journal wishes to take forward academic scholarship, it also seeks to strengthen opportunities for reflective practice that makes a scholarly contribution to the field. New knowledge emerging out of complex developmental contexts has significant value and needs to be showcased beyond existing geographical and political boundaries. The journal is therefore committed to also supporting the development of emerging researchers by providing them with a space to present and defend their research amongst a network of global scholars. Within the field of vocational and continuing education there is substantive 'grey literature' that remains in project report form. The journal is potentially a vehicle for the translation of this important work into an academic contribution to a wider community of practice, thereby enhancing its value.

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Conceptualised, typeset and proofread by COMPRESS.dsl | [www.compressdsl.com](http://www.compressdsl.com)

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Journal of Vocational, Adult and Continuing Education and Training could not have become a reality without the commitment of a number of individuals and organisations who provided support at critical stages of its development.

We are grateful for the vision of the University of the Western Cape Faculty of Education, especially that of the former Dean of Education, Prof. Zubeida Desai, for her enthusiasm for this venture.

We thank the Education Policy Consortium (EPC) for its initial seed funding grant which enabled the scoping research and the journal development workshop in 2016.

The encouragement of members of the Department of Higher Education and Training in the early phase of conceptualisation of the journal is gratefully acknowledged.

Our appreciation also goes to the MerSETA for their strategic partnership in this initiative and for making a consistent contribution towards developing TVET scholarship.

The publication of this issue of the journal has been made possible by the Teaching and Learning Development Capacity Improvement Programme which is being implemented through a partnership between the Department of Higher Education and Training and the European Union.

We are enormously grateful to our colleagues across the spectrum of post-school provision, who offered helpful advice as the journal processes unfolded.

Thank you to the authors who allowed us to subject their work to scrutiny and for being willing to publish in the JOVACET.

Our reviewers, who gave so generously of their time and talent, deserve a special word of thanks.

Thank you to our Editorial Committee and Advisory Board – we look forward to your continued participation and support.

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## **EDITORIAL**

# **JOVACET Vol 1, Issue 1: Researchable Issues in Vocational, Adult and Continuing Education and Training**

**Joy Papier**

*Editor-in-Chief*

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In this first edition of the Journal of Vocational, Adult and Continuing Education and Training (JOVACET), which we are thrilled to present, it is appropriate that the journey towards this publication should be described. Such description would be useful not only for readers who are unaware of this history – for those who have been involved more closely with the journal’s development, it should give pause for reflection on the road that has been travelled.

Within the ambit of post-schooling (beyond compulsory general education), adult and continuing education, higher education, and technical and vocational education and training (TVET) are recognised conceptual domains of knowledge and research. Of the three, higher education studies have historically been more prominent, in South Africa at least, and have generated the most scholarship. Despite the critical social and economic importance of TVET and adult/continuing education and training, research in these areas remains sparse and marginalised, hence the impetus to establish a new academic journal in the South African context, and on the African continent. However, while this focus is its ‘niche’, the journal intends to consistently position these domains as part of a more complex and dynamic post-school system with articulating components.

In 2014 the UWC Institute for Post-School Studies secured seed funding (see acknowledgements) to undertake a scoping exercise on the need for an academic journal focused particularly on post-school education and training. A comprehensive report was produced and a consultative workshop brought together a wide range of partners for discussion around strategic questions that had emerged from the scoping report, and to chart a way forward. There was general agreement by participants that, despite its stated importance in a variety of policy documents, TVET, but also adult and continuing education, remained



underdeveloped areas of scholarship across the continent. The creation of an academic space for *'building and strengthening the voice of the continent and the global south within international debates on vocational and continuing education and training'* (Journal Scoping Workshop, 2016) was deemed critical to South Africa and indeed the African continent. It was emphasised that such an academic journal should encourage critical engagement and reflect the voices and experiences of practitioners in vocational and adult/continuing education settings, and should seek to 'strengthen opportunities for reflective practice that makes a scholarly contribution to the field'.

Against this background, a journal launch conference was held in November 2017 under the rubric, researchable issues in vocational and continuing education and training, and it is this broad theme that has been the basis for the very first edition of the journal in 2018.

Papers presented at the conference dealt with many dilemmas and unanswered questions in TVET and adult and continuing education, from a variety of angles and vantage points. Hence this edition spans a wide range of issues across the spectrum of post-school learners and learning levels, from policy through to implementation.

The foreword by George Afeti, a scholar who has worked in post-schooling across Africa, opens a window onto the crisis of unemployment on the continent, and government attempts at revitalising vocational education with a view to providing employment-orientated skills training for youth and adults. As is generally the case in post-conflict economies, TVET as a sector is largely weak and emergent, and in need of systemic reform and funding. While policy development is acknowledged to be under way, there is the recognition of a policy mismatch, where policy goals are not supported by enabling systems and structures. Afeti points to ten 'key inhibiting factors' that ought to be addressed in order to revitalise TVET in Africa.

The painful reality of policies that fall short on their promises is conveyed also by John Aitchison in a policy thought-piece that provides a comprehensive overview of South African government attempts at the reconstruction of TVET and adult education. In an environment of competing interests, however legitimate, adult and community education (and TVET to a lesser extent), have drawn the short straws and continue to operate within budgets that inhibit them from achieving policy goals. The apparent vacillation on the part of authorities with regard to the crisis of those not in employment, education or training (NEET), through persistent underfunding of viable education and training options for them, is what leads Aitchison to believe that the problem (the 'nettle') is being weakly grasped, and can only result in unpleasant outcomes.

Still at a fairly macro-level, André Kraak reflects on the rationalisation and differentiation policy that was executed among universities in South Africa in the early 2000s, and the impact of institutional mergers on particularly the role of the former 'technikons' in the skills development continuum. Kraak argues that, in the move from 'technikons' to 'universities of technology', there has been significant academic drift, and that the former technikons have lost their

vocational edge in respect of high-level applied skills development in the technology fields. Two country case studies, of the Netherlands and Finland, are provided to showcase vocational systems alignment initiatives that are particularly aimed at fostering an applied research and development focus, and institutional engagement in local economic development. The rapid growth of these polytechnic systems is contrasted with the relatively low number of graduates from 'applied' technical programmes at reconstituted technikons in South Africa since 2000, the latter situation being ascribed to a 'flawed policy process' in respect of the former technikons, which has been to the detriment of applied training and research.

A stronger focus on the public TVET colleges, particularly on the concept of leadership, emerges from research undertaken by Robertson and Frick and Terblanche and Bitzer in articles dealing with leadership development at college manager level, and with development of curriculum leadership, respectively. In the former article, Robertson and Frick acknowledge the multiple roles that college leaders are called upon to play in the complex environment of public TVET in the throes of reform, balancing internal and external roles, and operating in an increasingly managerialist culture. They report on college leader perceptions of their roles with regard to management and leadership, which is a constant balancing act, with leaders in the study lamenting their loss of focus on teaching and learning (which they believe should be their core function) due to a preoccupation with corporate governance.

Terblanche and Bitzer, on the other hand, conceptualise a framework to support training and development of curriculum leaders, where TVET curricula are conceived of as structured theory combined with practical learning, and with workplace learning. They argue that leading curriculum change on the ground is hampered by centralised control of curriculum processes, and limited powers to effect such change at the college level. Nonetheless, the authors report on a study that undertook to establish how college participants at various leadership levels understood the curriculum changes that needed to be effected. In the process, respondents commented on aspects they believed to be critical to curriculum change, and the centrality of industry alignment of college curricula. Many of the shortcomings of current programmes were highlighted, for instance outdated content and limited practical training, though these are generally well known and have been prioritised by government for urgent attention. In spite of nationally designed curricula, college leaders believed that they ought to develop curriculum design skills in order that curricula be made more responsive to industry and community needs. A curriculum development framework based on input from college leaders is proposed, together with suggested modules for building necessary leadership skills.

Policy intentions for TVET state that at least two avenues should remain open to TVET graduates, that of progression into higher education, and access into employment. However, articulation of TVET learners into universities has proven difficult to effect, and tends to depend largely on institutional relationships and cooperation. Needham and Papier share the outcomes of a research and development project that negotiated a pathway for learners employed in the insurance sector who undertook an upgrading programme in TVET colleges, for entry into a university qualification at a higher level. In the project, learners performed fairly well at

the TVET college, but subsequent throughput at university was exceedingly poor, and the reasons for this are interrogated. Part of the problem, it emerged, was the gap between the exit level of the college qualification and the entry level of the university qualification. In addition, differences in curriculum structure, assessment regimes, and learning support between what was effectively a practice-informed, industry-driven programme delivered at the college, and a more theoretical university programme, left learners with insufficient disciplinary knowledge to cope with university learning.

Two articles deal with college lecturer development, an area of TVET in which the local knowledge base is considerably thin. With the legislation in 2013 of a lecturer professionalisation policy and new official qualifications for teaching in TVET, universities have been given the task of developing and offering the new qualifications, and these are at various stages of registration and accreditation at the Council on Higher Education (CHE). Van der Bijl and Taylor, in their article, consider the issue of lecturer internships/placements in industry as a prerequisite for certification in the new qualifications. Work-integrated learning (WIL) is compulsory for teacher education students, where students undertake a stint of practice teaching in school settings. This same model applies to vocational teachers (college lecturers), where they need to undergo a period of practice teaching at college, but with the additional requirement that they spend time also in an industry setting. The rationale for this is that college lecturers need to understand the work spaces that their students will be entering in order for there to be more effective teaching in a college context. They argue that university faculties of education would have little experience of student placements in industry settings; hence they report on a 'WIL for Lecturers' project that undertook industry placements for in-service college lecturers, and surveyed lecturers who had completed their placements, about their motivation for taking up a placement, and their industry experiences. Lecturer feedback was instructive, with most lecturers reporting positive learning experiences that made them feel part of a broader professional community and allowed them to establish relationships with industry experts in their field.

Rudman and Meiring, also on the topic of vocational teacher education, take a retrospective look at a short capacity-building programme instituted prior to the new qualifications for lecturers, with a view to offering a transformative lens for the construction of new lecturer qualifications currently under way in universities. Using their programme as a vehicle for incorporating the university commitment to a humanising pedagogy, the authors undertook a small study of how lecturers perceived the implementation of this approach and their perceptions of its influence on their classroom practice, which they followed up two years later with the same lecturers. Based on self-reflections of the lecturer participants in the training programme, the article tentatively concludes that humanising pedagogies in post-conflict societies still fractured by distrust, are potentially transformative and healing, albeit implemented on a small scale and aimed at transforming 'one lecturer at a time'.

Moving from the local to the global, Martin Mulder delves into a German initiative that intends to set out a research programme on TVET, and comments on the priority research areas and

themes that are being proposed. The research strands that were derived confirm the need for collaboration across localities, in that the insufficiency of the knowledge base is widely accepted across contexts, and many of the questions posed are similar. Mulder highlights four research themes that are relevant in international VET development, but which resonate strongly in the issues that would be recognised as necessary research areas locally. Each of the four themes – cooperation between employers, industry and government; learning within work; national standards; and qualified vocational staff – speaks to generally accepted concerns on these matters, and can be located in the range of research topics Mulder gleaned from international reviews of vocational research, and helpfully clustered for prospective researchers. International VET research cooperation, Mulder avers, is ‘important for positioning VET and VET research higher on the ladder of esteem in education and educational research’, but he cautions that ‘continuous improvement of practice’ which contributes to an increase in the quality of learning processes and to improved results should be the ultimate goal, rather than research for the sake of research.

Finally, Shirley Walters rounds up this cross-sectoral edition and its focus on ‘researchable issues’ with an article on ‘adult learning and education in times of climate crisis’. Using the Western Cape’s recent drought experience to illustrate how adult learning has had to accommodate the concern with saving water, Walters brings together key insights about both environmental matters and the place of adult learning. The concept of ALE (Adult learning and education) is mooted as part of an emerging discourse that is attempting to find a common language for adult and lifelong learning. Adult learning is concerned with all aspects of living and livelihood, and is called upon to respond to the myriad challenges of individual and community life, in line with popular education and its roots in social movements. Advancing the sustainability of life on our planet is one of the areas of contestation that demands innovative responses, and Walters holds that the participation of people in these struggles is critical for learning, and for building the agency to effect change that results from such struggle.

We are proud of all our authors who subjected their work to robust scrutiny, and we sincerely hope that this first edition will be a stimulus for future contributors to the JOVACET. Our deep appreciation goes to all who have made this first and historic publication possible.