

# JVET

JOURNAL | CONFERENCE

RESEARCH COMMUNITY

[Home](#) [About](#) [New](#)

[Early Career Researcher](#)

[Contact Us](#)

[Journal](#) [Conferences](#)

## JVET Special Issue call for papers

### The Social Role of Colleges in International Perspectives

**Guest editors:**

**Leesa Wheelahan, Gavin Moodie, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education,  
University of Toronto, Canada**

**Jakob Kost, Bern University of Teacher Education, Switzerland**



## CALL FOR PAPERS

This special issue will explore the important role of community colleges, further education colleges, polytechnics, technical and further education institutes, vocational education colleges and similar types of institutions in supporting social, economic, cultural and educational development and social inclusion in their local communities and regions.

Colleges and similar educational institutions at the interface of vocational education and training and higher education play a central role in many education systems. Internationally, there are different variations of such institutions: in one case, they form the central site of vocational training; in another, they build on dual vocational training at the secondary level. Depending on the national context, they focus on technical vocational training or cover the entire spectrum of trades, services, social, care or artistic professions. Previous research has focused on the enabling effects of college qualifications (or credentials) at the individual level, e.g., what careers they enable through the award of credentials. The broader impact of such institutions on regions, communities and their cultural and social life or their importance as regional centres are hardly discussed.

The roles of schools and universities are generally understood and institutionalized as broadly intellectual and cultural in ways that are well established historically and globally. In contrast, vocational colleges are 'mainly local organizations justified by specific economic and political functions or shaped by particular historical legacies or power struggles' (Meyer et al., 2007, pp. 187, 210). Considering their importance for society, the role they play in the respective education and social systems has been largely unexplored. We argue that colleges' social role is not as well understood or theorised as the social roles of universities and schools. Moreover, their role is often cast as residual, as doing what schools and universities don't do. This matters because colleges are vital for the well-being of their local communities. They support their regions and communities in many, often invisible, ways. However, the ways in which they do so differ in different countries which we invite authors to explore in papers for this special issue.

We encourage a diverse range of voices. We welcome contributions from a broad range of countries and systems that reflect the diverse form and nature of colleges. For example, in some systems, colleges are closely integrated with universities, while in others they are sharply demarcated from them and closely integrated with schools. Yet in others, they are separate types of institutions in separate sectors of post-school education. In some systems, colleges' roles are broadly defined, and notions of workforce preparation are understood broadly, yet in others, colleges' roles are more narrowly defined, and required to focus specifically on competencies needed for tasks and roles at work. Systems vary in the balance between public and private funding for provision by colleges, and in the extent to which colleges are public institutions, private for-profit providers, or a combination of the two. In some systems, colleges are public institutions required to contribute to public policy goals, while in others colleges are mainly providers competing in for-profit market. Governance arrangements also vary, including the extent to which colleges are under the purview of national/federal, state/regional, or local authorities. Employers' roles in system governance, curriculum and the provision of work-place learning also varies, as does the extent to which they contribute financially to this provision. While colleges are generally lower in status compared to universities, they vary in the nature of the relationships they have with universities; in some systems colleges and universities are in a difficult and fractious relationship as a consequence of expectations that college graduates will be able to articulate to university studies, while in other systems they have very little to do with each other with separate qualifications reflecting the different purposes of the institutions and sectors. In some systems, there is cross-over in the qualifications or credentials awarded by schools and colleges, and by colleges and universities, whereas in others each type of institution

and sector has sharply demarcated rights and obligations to award different types of qualifications. Some colleges concentrate on upper-level programs such as bachelors and masters, some concentrate on mid-level programs such as associate degrees and diplomas, while others concentrate on certificates and other lower-level programs (Grubb, 2003, p. 7).

In this special issue we aim to bring together a diverse range of voices to describe and theorise colleges' social role. We particularly welcome contributions that seek to define, describe and theorise colleges' social role, and distinguish it from colleges' much more well recognised roles of developing students' capacities and preparing them for work.

To be considered for inclusion, papers must go beyond describing the role of colleges by offering a theorised account of colleges. Such an account could draw on a range of theoretical approaches, including (but not limited to) institutional theory, political economy, the sociology of education, policy studies, or other appropriate theoretical frameworks.

We invite papers that contribute to an understanding of the social roles of colleges and the theoretical and empirical connections of colleges in different contexts.

**Contributions might address, but are not limited to, the following issues:**

- System design and the place of colleges.
- The roles of colleges in national and diverse contexts.
- The theoretical and/or empirical evaluations of the roles of colleges.
- The ways colleges support their communities in diverse contexts.
- The ways colleges contribute to social inclusion in their communities and regions.
- The ways colleges contribute to social, economic, cultural and educational development in their local communities.
- The ways colleges support the well-being of their communities.
- Theorising the roles of colleges.
- Convergent and divergent developments in the roles of colleges in different countries.

**Information for submission**

- 2 Oct 2023: Close of abstracts
- 1 Nov 2023: Invitation to submit full papers
- 1 May 2024: Deadline for full papers
- 24 July 2024: Papers returned to authors after first round of review
- 4 Sept 2024: Resubmission of papers
- 27 Nov 2024: Papers returned to authors after second round of review
- 12 Feb 2025: Final submission of papers
- Published in JVET in 2025

Prospective contributors are invited to submit an expression of interest and extended abstract of up to 500 words by 2 October 2023 to [Leesa.Wheelahan@utoronto.ca](mailto:Leesa.Wheelahan@utoronto.ca).

The guest editors will contact all contributors and inform them of the outcome of their submission by 1 November 2023.

A selection of authors will be invited to submit a full paper with a deadline for submission of 1 May 2024.

An invitation to submit a full paper does not guarantee publication as all papers will be subject to the Journal's peer review process.

Submitted papers must follow the **Journal's guidelines** for presentation, and be submitted through the publisher's Scholarone system.

## References

Grubb, W. N. (2003). The roles of tertiary colleges and institutes: Trade-offs in restructuring postsecondary education. OECD, <https://www.oecd.org/education/skills-beyond-school/35757628.pdf>

Meyer, J. W., Ramirez, F. O., Frank, D. J., & Schofer, E. (2007). Higher education as an institution. In P. J. Gumport (Ed.), *Sociology of higher education: Contexts and their contributions* (pp. 187-221). Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.