

Call for papers: Special issue on leadership and organizational learning in VET

In recent years, leadership, leadership development, and the role of leadership in building capacity for organizational change have attracted increasing attention. This increased focus on leadership must be seen in light of the major changes currently taking place in the vocational school sector, where new political reforms and demands from the business community continuously place new requirements on schools' ability to offer quality education. Research indicates that many leaders in the vocational education sector experience their everyday leadership as complex, with limited opportunities to fulfil their roles as they would like at the desired level. As a result, many end up leaving their leadership positions. Leadership in vocational education operates at the intersection of policy, pedagogy, and workplace relations, a field where Nordic traditions of collaboration, trust, and co-determination meet new managerial reforms, accountability regimes, and demands for innovation. These tensions create both challenges and opportunities for leadership development and organizational learning in the VET sector.

With this special issue, we aim to strengthen the emerging field of research on leadership and organizational learning in vocational education by exploring how leadership can foster sustainable professional and organizational development in times of reform and complexity. A central question, then, is how we can work with leadership and leadership development in ways that make it attractive to remain a leader at a vocational school? How can leadership communities contribute to enhancing leaders' job satisfaction and sense of meaning? How can embracing the complexity of leadership open new forms of leading?? What impact does leadership education have on leaders' sense of success? These are just some of the interesting questions one might ask about the topic. Possible themes include, but are not limited to:

- Leadership development and professional identity in VET
- Leadership communities and collective learning
- Tensions between managerial and pedagogical logics
- The impact of leadership education and capacity building
- Collaborative and practice-based approaches to management learning in VET

We welcome empirical studies, theoretical work, and practice-based research. In addition to identifying challenges, we encourage contributions that offer constructive insights for leadership practice, continuous leadership development, and leaders' well-being. Authors are also invited to reflect on leadership in relation to the development of VET schools' organizational learning capacity to manage ongoing organizational and pedagogical transformation. By addressing these questions, the special issue seeks to generate new knowledge that can strengthen leadership capacity, support sustainable school development, and inspire future policy and practice in vocational education.

Anja Overgaard Thomassen, Anne-Birgitte Rohwedder, Anne Stouby Persson, Arnt Louw, and Søren Frimann will serve as guest editors in collaboration with the editorial team of the Scandinavian Journal of Vocations in Development (SJVD). Abstracts (max. 800 words,

excluding references) may be submitted in a Scandinavian language or English and should outline the topic, purpose, research questions, theory/method, and preliminary results. We warmly invite interested authors to submit an abstract and contribute to research on leadership and learning in vocational education. Please send your abstract as a single document to Anja Overgaard Thomassen aot@ikl.aau.dk. Abstracts will be reviewed in consultation with the editorial team. Final papers will undergo double-blind peer review.

Timeline:

Abstract deadline: 1st May 2026

Feedback on abstract: 15th June 2026

Paper deadline: 15th November 2026

Publication: 1st September 2027