

Invitation to contribute articles for the special thematic issue of *Journal of Contemporary Educational Studies*:

Skills of adults from the diversity perspective – reflections on the PIAAC research results

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The PIAAC (Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competences) is the most comprehensive survey of the ways adults acquire and utilize skills in various living environments, with a special emphasis on the workplace, enabling research of the relationships between cognitive skills and various demographic variables, economic and other achievements, and the utilisation of these skills at the workplace and elsewhere. In the forefront of the PIAAC survey are the skills necessary for labour market placement, while the skills and knowledge necessary for quality personal and social life are largely marginal (Motschilnig 2014). The issues of the impact of acquired skills in the areas of active citizenship, social cohesion and personal development therefore remain considerably neglected.

The data provided by the survey are a basis for reflection on policies and measures needed to improve the skills and knowledge of adults in various areas of life. It is important to consider the judgements of the researchers, the expectations of the politicians and the abilities of the practitioners who daily face the challenges of adult education and training and their acquired knowledge and skills (Tighe 2014).

In this special thematic issue we wish to encourage authors to critically analyse the results of the PIAAC survey and facilitate a discussion about the comparability of the achievements of adults in European and other OECD countries. We also wish to encourage a comparative analysis of the adults' achievements in acquiring literacy and mathematical skills and in their proficiency in problem solving in technology-rich environment. A special emphasis is placed on the issues of enabling various groups of adults – with differing opportunities for education, training and learning – to participate in various social processes.

The main proposed issues and topics are:

1. How much significance do the participating countries ascribe to the achievements of their citizens included in the PIAAC survey? How do national policies respond to either poor or good results of their citizens, how do they interpret them, how much are they prepared to invest into changes necessary to improve them? How are the results of the PIAAC survey weighed in comparison to PISA results which demonstrate the achievement of youth?
2. What do the results of the PIAAC survey really show? We wish to encourage a critical evaluation of the survey results from the standpoint of national and cross-national comparability of various (vulnerable) adult groups with different socio-demographic characteristics (education, gender, age, ethnicity, socio-economic status, etc.), originating

from different living environments (urban-rural, regions, etc.). How can we interpret the results of minorities and socially marginalised groups, how are the different levels of achievement expressed and what implications do they bring? How are the results related to culturally specific practices and norms of various social groups?

3. How to interpret the data on the achievement of employed persons? What encouragements for education and training do various groups of employees (by age, education level, workplace demands, ethnicity, enterprise size etc.) receive from their employers, and how does this reflect in their skills acquisition? What implications do the higher or lower skill levels have for the adults' income, employability, for their opportunities for innovation and competition? What differences can be observed between various vocational groups regarding their achievements and skill levels?
4. In what way are the results of the survey significant for adult education planning, both in terms of national comparisons and at the national level (considering age, linguistic, cultural, economic, educational, and other factors)? What is their meaning in terms of the implementation of the principle of lifelong learning, and how to interpret them from the viewpoint of initial education? What proposals and initiatives will be relevant to the interest groups involved: employers, governments, trade unions, and others? What kinds of measures can be expected following a public debate between the politicians, researchers and practitioners?

All researchers and practitioners involved in the above topic are invited to contribute their articles for the special thematic issue. We are looking for scientific and professional articles (max. 45,000 characters incl. spaces). For more instructions for authors, please consult author guidelines (<http://bit.ly/sp-author-guidelines>), or contact the editors of the special thematic issue.

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