

December 7, 2021, 2:00 – 3:30 p.m., online meeting

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Literacy and Level One Research in Germany with LEO 2018 – What’s New and What Is Available?

Literacy has been a major concern in many countries since the International Adult Literacy Survey in the mid-1990ies, but German findings were never discussed in public. Germany also decided not to participate in ALL, but waited for PIAAC. Meanwhile, a Level One Survey was launched (LEO 2010). The findings caused a debate on Laender and State level, recently resulting in a “Decade for Literacy”.

Interim studies focused not the person with low literacy skills, but their friends, colleagues, supporters, mentors and family (Riekmann, Buddeberg & Grotlüschen, 2016). Even though this perspective was more innovative, practitioners and policy makers waited for the findings of the second LEO 2018. They show an overall improvement (12.1% of the adult population perform within Alpha-Levels 1-3/ Literacy Level One, compared to 14,.5% in 2010).

However, the LEO 2018 cannot show effects of the Decade or any other adult educational funding program. A couple of effects probably interfere: first, an overall cohort effect (longer average years of schooling) may be responsible for the improvement of competences. Second, some large policies that improve literacy without addressing it (ZuwG, SGB III), but that have massive participation rates plus high amounts of training hours. Third, a long-term shift towards more participation in adult education. So, before claiming that literacy policy didn’t matter, it makes sense to see the long-term educational expansion within the data.

Apart from this discussion, the LEO provides rich background data on financial, health, political and digital competences and practices. Self-reports are organised as “practices”; “functional competences” and “critical competences”. An overall perspective shows that people with low literacy skills are especially vulnerable to exclusion with regard to their critical competences (in all domains, e.g. health or political aspects). This is dangerous in times of COVID-19 and far right populism.

LEO 2018 Cheat Sheet:

Constructs and measures:

- Literacy (assessment with Rasch model, IRT)
- Linking study with PIAAC Paper & Pencil
- 4 areas of life (work, family, adult education, migration/languages)
- 4 domains with self-reports on competences (health, financial, political, digital literacy)
- Forgotten variables (that don't belong to any of the domains or areas of life)

Within each domain:

- Practices (how often do you)
- Functional-pragmatic competences (how easy is it to do)
- Critical competences (how easy is it to judge)

Publications that give an overview (all via LEO Blog <https://leo.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/>)

- LEO Level One Survey (German, Waxmann, open access)
- Short brochure (German & English)
- Overview in English: Grotlüschen, Anke; Buddeberg, Klaus; Dutz, Gregor; Heilmann, Lisanne; Stammer, Christopher (2020): Low literacy in Germany. Results from the second German literacy survey. In: European Journal for Research on the Education and Learning of Adults (RELA) 11 (1). DOI: 10.3384/rela.2000-7426.rela9147

Helpful data available via the LEO Blog <https://leo.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/>:

- Background Questionnaire (German & English), LEO-Blog (section: Downloads)
- PUF, SUF (GESIS, German, English to come)

Not yet available online but on request:

- List of Variables (Excel)
- Informal theoretical framework (where did we borrow which variable, what research is linked to it)
- Training Videos (under construction, German so far)
- Support until May 2023 (end of the LEO Transfer Project)