

Editorial Note

The eighth issue of our magazine comes once again at a time when critical approaches to Adult Education are more necessary than ever for taking informed and impactful action. This issue brings together seven distinct yet interconnected contributions that critically examine contemporary educational discourses and practices across Europe. Each article offers a compelling lens through which we can spot current challenges and opportunities, inviting readers to reflect on the deeper purposes of education and training in an increasingly complex world.

The opening article by Lintzeris and Valassi offers a critical analysis of the European Commission's recently launched *Union of Skills Communication*, presenting it as indicative of a broader shift toward the economization of education policy. The authors examine the policy's focus on competitiveness and short-term labor market needs, arguing that this technocratic approach to skills development risks eclipsing the critical, inclusive, and democratic purposes of education. They advocate for a more socially just and holistic skills agenda—one that emphasizes solidarity, inclusiveness, and lifelong human development over narrow economic utility.

Continuing the discussion on policy and practice, Karakolia and Vasilopoulos explore how vocational education and training (VET) educators engage with recent legislative frameworks concerning evaluation and quality assurance in Greece's public Institutes of Vocational Education (SAEK). Drawing on qualitative interviews, the study reveals a field grappling with ambiguities and resistance. Educators voice skepticism toward externally imposed metrics and emphasize the complexity of fostering authentic quality without adequate institutional support.

The third contribution by Poulimenou and Panitsidou turns to the educational potential and challenges of integrating Artificial Intelligence into the classroom. Through a nationwide quantitative study, the article captures educators' readiness to employ AI tools in their teaching, while also surfacing deeper anxieties about the potential dehumanization of the learning process. While practitioners recognize AI's value in supporting learning, they call for balanced, ethically grounded integration that preserves the relational and pedagogical essence of education.

Chiu re-examines Mezirow's transformative learning theory through the underexplored lens of emotionality. By engaging with Franz Brentano's psychological theories, the author proposes a reconceptualization of critical reflection as a synthesis of rational and affective dimensions. This nuanced interpretation not only enriches the theoretical landscape of adult learning but also suggests practical implications for educators aiming to support transformative, emotionally aware learning experiences.

Damala in her article explores cinema as a pedagogical medium within Second Chance Schools, institutions dedicated to adult learners seeking to re-enter education. The authors make a compelling case for the power of film to foster critical thinking, empathy, and emotional engagement. Anchored in established adult learning theories and informed by examples from both Greek and European contexts, the paper demonstrates how audiovisual

narratives can become transformative tools—provided educators receive proper training and infrastructural support.

Gender and equity take center stage in the contribution of Tsiboukli and Babalis, which critically investigates women's participation in lifelong learning and its impact on labor market integration. Despite high levels of engagement in learning programs, the data reveals a persistent disconnect between educational participation and access to leadership roles. The findings raise important questions about the structural barriers that continue to limit women's opportunities, urging policymakers to move beyond quantitative participation metrics and toward equity-driven strategies.

The article of Sidira and Nagopoulos offers a thoughtful inquiry into the process of identifying educational needs within participatory pedagogical frameworks. Highlighting the multilayered nature of these needs—explicit, implicit, and hidden—it examines how educational planning can become a dynamic, iterative, and democratic process. The author emphasizes the role of participatory assessment tools, institutional contexts, and educator-learner relationships in shaping meaningful and responsive learning trajectories.

Finally, in Christou's book review, the Greek edition of Alexis Kokkos book is presented — *Exploring Art for Perspective Transformation*, published by Brill/Sense (2021). This is a highly significant monograph by Alexis Kokkos, Professor Emeritus of Adult Education at the Hellenic Open University, focusing on the role of art in adult education and the promotion of critically reflective processes.

Together, these contributions challenge us to rethink the role of Adult Education in times of profound transition. While varied in their methodological and thematic approaches, the articles collectively advocate for education as a deeply human endeavor—one that must remain attuned to justice, reflection, emotional engagement, and social transformation.

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