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Skills and Labor Market Performance



Guest Editors' Foreword

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Guest Editors' Foreword

Skills can be defined as a group of abilities or proficiencies which are normally acquired through education, experience or training, and in essence, they are critical for employability as structural changes, such as increased competitiveness, globalization and technological progress, call for ever-higher and more labor market-relevant skills for productivity growth and secure quality jobs. Having sufficient levels of fundamental skills is essential for young people to smoothly access the labor market and for adults to retain employment in high quality and stable jobs. Additionally, skills may also influence career choices, since several jobs are extremely wanted. Therefore, various aspects of skills are considered to be the factors which affect the employment prospect and the social and labor market performance.

Over the last few decades, discrepancies can be found, regarding the key skills required in the labor market. In the 70s, increased creativity and cooperation were most appreciated, in the 80s, customer treatment and behavior, taking initiatives and reliability appeared to be important skills, while in the 90s, apart from the educational attainment, social and technical skills were considered essential, especially for young workers. Since 2000, skills demands have persistently risen, incorporating communication skills in the clients' language, intercultural communication and advanced foreign language use.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution we live in is characterized by a highly technological and digital environment where new skills and interaction abilities play a fundamental role, as they directly affect our work and the way we relate to one another. A core element of this transition is the rapid change of skills required by the labor market. Within this framework, research on the role of skills on labor market performance is constantly gaining more attention. This pattern has been successively evolving from 2016 onward into the so-called "New Skills Agenda for Europe".

This Agenda launched ten actions to improve the quality and relevance of training and other ways of acquiring skills, to make skills more visible and comparable and to improve information and understanding of trends and patterns in demands for skills and jobs to enable people make better career choices and find quality jobs. Similarly, institutions and organizations such as International Labor Organization (ILO), Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and European Commission, try to promote the role of skills in the modern labor market and boost research on the determinants of skills required.

In this direction, the Survey of Adult Skills as part of the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), in 2011 and 2012 surveyed approximately 150,000 working age adults (16- 65) in 24 countries and measured key cognitive and workplace skills that are needed. This international survey is expected to be fulfilled in 2019 and is conducted in over 40 countries.

In 2017, the ILO initiated a programme of research, communications and product development that focuses on the issue of jobs and skills matches which is called “The ILO Global Product on Jobs and Skills Mismatch”. Additionally, the OECD has undertaken a programme of work in close collaboration with the World Bank, ETF, ILO and UNESCO in order to provide information about labor market needs and skill gaps. This program, among others, sets up a database of skills needs indicators, which is called World Indicators of Skills for Employment (WISE) database, to examine the skills challenges and performance of 214 countries.

Recently, in April 2018, EU countries adopted the Commission's proposal to revise the Europass framework to offer people better and easier-to-use tools to present their skills and obtain useful real-time information on skills needs and trends to help them with career and learning choices. Therefore, we could say that there is a growing interest, in recent years, on the importance of skills in the modern and competitive labor market.

This volume contributes to the related research by investigating key issues, themes and problems of skills required in the labor market. The present issue of the *Journal of Language, Translation and Intercultural Communication* is titled “**Skills and Labor Market Performance**” and tries to stimulate the discussion on the role of skills on the social and labor market outcomes and is expected to be useful for policymakers with respect to the design of successful strategies aimed at improving the employment prospect and the performance of an economy. Following the Journal’s policy, all papers passed through blind peer review.

Several of the above issues are addressed in the articles of this volume:

Mr. **Chaikalis**-Petritsis in his article examines the challenges posed to workers over the age of 55 in correlation with the prolongation of the working life by extending retirement age. The author highlights the negative stereotypes that characterize the 55+ age group regarding reduced physical and cognitive abilities as well as the inability to acquire new skills, explains the negative effects of the internalization of these age stereotypes by older adults and suggests ways of reducing this negative impact.

Mr. **Wilson** examines how English language proficiency affects communication between international tourists and tourist advisers in Marseille's Tourist office. The author analyzing the data occurred from a research project explains that the English language has a strong impact on the Tourist Office's labor market and acts as a discriminatory factor in the recruitment of tourism professionals.

Mrs. **Sasaki** in her article points out that Asian interpretation labor market needs to provide multi-language interpreting services and in many training institutions students learn interpreting skills in various language combinations. The author presents a small-scale empirical study on note-taking in consecutive interpretation in order to illustrate the way interpreter trainees with different language skill sets carry out similar tasks in different interpretation settings. The article argues that the language skill required for each trend in the interpretation labor market is defined by the specific interpretation settings.

Mr. **Giotis** discusses on skills and their impact on labor market performance. The author presents an analysis on skill needs, shortages and surpluses across Europe, and examines the relationship between unemployment and information, communication, problem solving, software and digital skills. He estimates the effect of three levels of education on unemployment rates using a sample of 28 European countries for the 1999-2016 time period. The author finds that tertiary and elementary education, are both negatively correlated to unemployment, while secondary education is connected with increased unemployment rates.

Finally, Mr. **Panos** and Mr. **Yang** present a firm-level inquiry on labor-demand characteristics in the BRICS economies, using standardized data from the World Bank Enterprise Surveys for the pre-crisis period of 2002-2003. The results of the study reveal interesting patterns highlighting considerable sources of heterogeneity with respect to employment growth and net job creation, skilled labor demand and rent-sharing in the five economies. Among other results, the authors find that the returns to skill are lower in SMEs and young firms, and provide evidence in favor of rent sharing, particularly in Brazil and India, by foreign and exporting firms, and by SMEs in China.

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