

## THE 30TH ANNIVERSARY OF *STUDIES IN ADULT EDUCATION AND LEARNING*

This year marks the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary since the publication of the first issue of *Studies in Adult Education and Learning* in 1995. The editor in chief (as well as founding editor) Ana Krajnc (1995) wrote in the first editorial that *Studies in Adult Education and Learning* is “a central Slovenian journal, which will cover *all areas of adult education* equally” (p. 3, italics in the original). Thirty years later, we continue the journal’s original mission by publishing a diverse array of contributions from a wide range of social sciences, humanities and other scientific disciplines that deal with learning and education in adulthood and old age, as well as related phenomena, along with contributions that cover the different areas of adult education such as general adult education (literacy), active citizenship and migrant education, adult higher education, workplace education and training (work-based learning), community education, popular education, education in museums, galleries and libraries, distance education and more (see Rubenson, 2010).

Over the past three decades, the journal has created a space for the expansion of the profession, strengthened dialogue and knowledge transfer between researchers and practitioners, facilitated critical discussion, and played an important role in the development and introduction of new practices into Slovenian adult education, a mission that Ana Krajnc (1995) envisioned when the journal began, Nives Ličen (2014) reiterated on the occasion of its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and that we have continued to uphold during our time as editors.

To mark the occasion, we have conducted an analysis of all the keywords from the articles and editorials of the past three decades, which has shown, as expected, that the most common topics addressed in *Studies in Adult Education and Learning* include various educational and learning processes. “Adult education”, “education”, “lifelong learning” and “learning” are the only keywords with a frequency of occurrence above 30 (see Figure 1).<sup>1</sup> 36 other terms for (different) educational and learning processes appear at least three times among the keywords. This indicates considerable conceptual diversity (e.g. informal

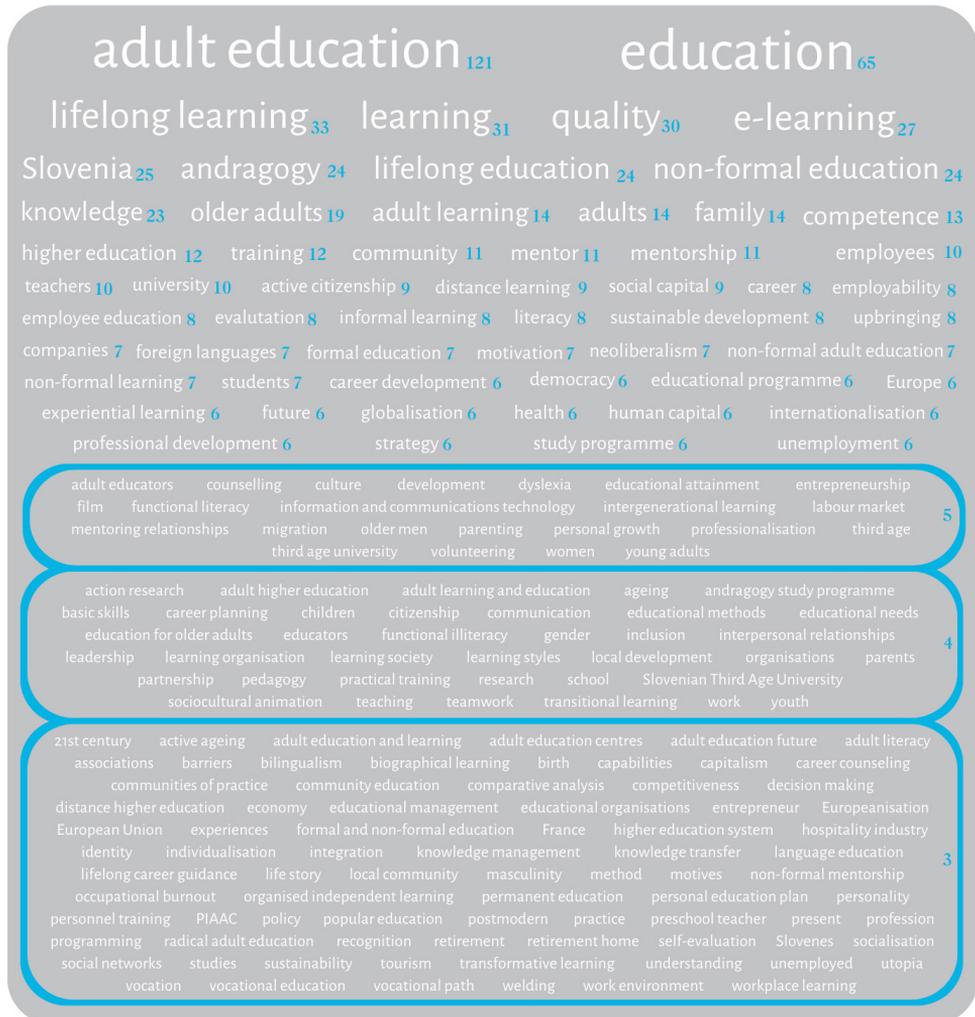
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1 The majority of the articles and editorials provide keywords. When this is not the case (especially in the first eight volumes of the journal), we used the nouns and noun phrases in the titles. The keywords were used in their original form, with minor exceptions. If keywords with the same meaning appeared in different versions, we counted all instances of occurrence under the more frequently used version. This occurred in the case of singular and plural words (e.g. reform/reforms, learning organisation/learning organisations) and synonyms that did not use the same spelling or used abbreviations (e.g. ICT/information and communications technology). The full chronological list of the keywords is provided on the website as an appendix to this preface.

learning, intergenerational learning, adult higher education). Of the 3307 keywords in total, almost half (48%) appear only once and 12% appear twice. The most commonly used keywords (40%) and their frequency of occurrence are listed in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*The frequency of occurrence of the keywords used in articles and editorials published in Adult Education and Learning in the past 30 years*

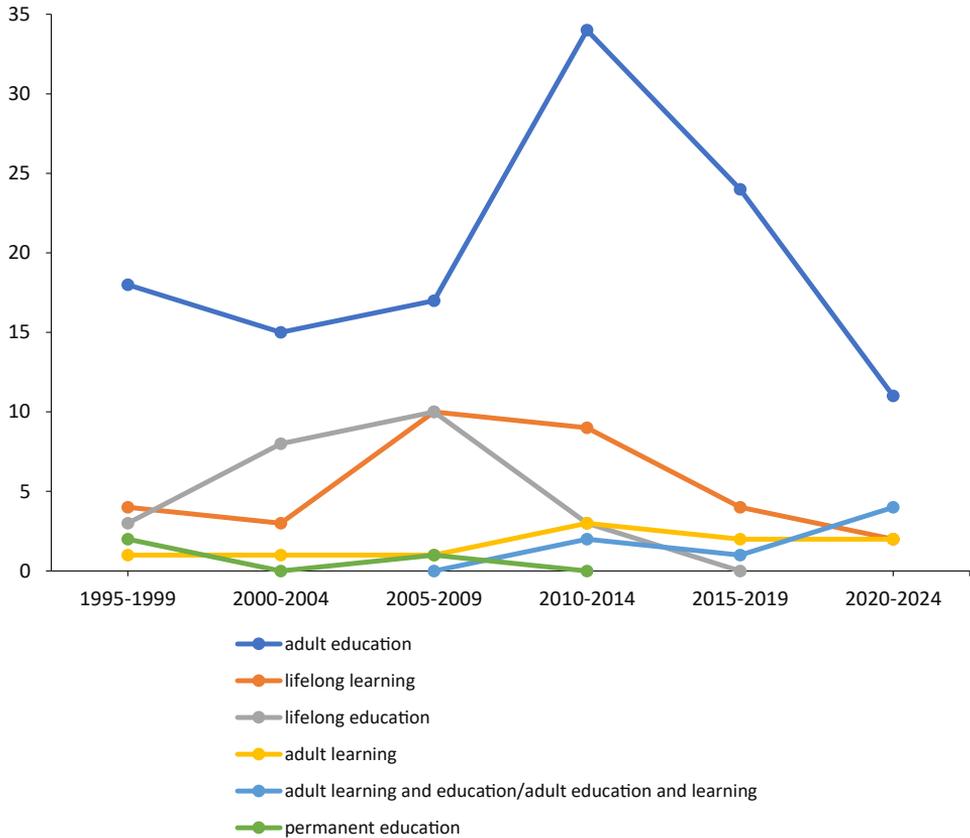


Note. The keywords listed above appear in at least three different articles and/or editorials.

Certain changes in how individual concepts were used at various times in the 30-year period are also noticeable. Graph 1 illustrates the frequency of occurrence of the terminology that specifically deals with adult education and learning in five-year intervals.

**Graph 1**

*The main terms used to discuss adult education and learning that have appeared in the keywords of editorials and articles in Adult Education and Learning in the past 30 years*



Note. As the graph shows the use of terms in five year increments, it is important to note that the journal was published four times a year between 1995 and 2018, three times a year between 2019 and 2020, and twice a year after that. The number of contributions and thus the number of keywords also varies across journal volumes and issues. Of the total 3307 keywords, 352 are from the first, 497 from the second, 634 from the third, 791 from the fourth, 644 from the fifth and 389 from the sixth five-year publication period.

The predominant use of “adult education” was to be expected, but what is more surprising is a significant decline in its use in the last decade, when it increasingly appears in the same context as adult learning – in the phrase “adult learning and education” or “adult education and learning”. There is also a decline in the use of the rest of the concepts in the last decade, which can in part be attributed to the overall lower frequency of keywords. However, there is also a noticeable decline in the use of “lifelong learning” and “lifelong education”, both of which experienced their peak in the 2005–2009 period. This reflects broader global trends, which have been fairly consistent across the English-speaking world, as Shalini

Singh shows in her article in this issue. Two concepts appear to have fallen entirely out of use in this period: “permanent education” last appeared among the keywords in 2007, and “lifelong education”, once the second most frequently used concept, in 2014.

In the last decade, open access to articles, publishing contributions in English and attracting (more notable) international authors have increased the visibility of the journal among adult education professionals and researchers in the international arena. In the last five years, the journal has published work by authors from North America (USA, Canada), Europe (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Croatia, Ireland, Italy, Hungary, Malta, Germany, Norway, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Serbia, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom), Africa (Nigeria, South Africa) and the Asia-Pacific region (Australia, India, South Korea, Laos). Open access to articles via the website has increased our range of readers, who today come not only from Slovenia (although these readers remain the most numerous) but also from other countries. The largest online reach is recorded in the USA, Great Britain, Croatia, Germany, Canada, Australia, Serbia, Greece and China, and a substantial set of regular readers also comes from Italy, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Portugal, Ukraine, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Sweden, Ireland, Finland and India.

Since making the journal more accessible to the wider international community in 2015, citations in journals indexed in international bibliographic databases such as Scopus and WoS have increased, the international editorial board has been bolstered by prominent European academics and researchers of adult education, and the journal has been included in quite a few international bibliographic databases (e.g. Erih Plus, DOAJ, CrossRef, EBSCO, ProQuest, Education Research Abstracts Online (ERA), CNKI, VOCEDplus, Asian Science Citation Index (ASCI)). Unfortunately, despite the editorial board’s efforts, *Studies in Adult Education and Learning* has not been included in the Scopus international bibliographic database (yet). The two key criticisms provided by Scopus are that the journal has an insufficient number of citations in journals already included in the Scopus database (especially in view of how long the journal has existed) and that many high quality international journals which deal with adult education already exist. The argument concerning citations can be accepted as a serious shortcoming and will require further effort in the future, although it should be noted that citations are also an object of dispute in the international academic community because it is difficult to say what it is exactly they show (e.g. negative citations may indicate disagreement or fault-finding in another document); additionally, citations vary between disciplines and journals not published in English have few opportunities for international citation (Aman and Botte, 2017). It is especially the second criticism of the journal (and the field of adult education) that is cause for concern. What criteria does a multinational publishing giant like Elsevier use to decide how many journals a certain field or discipline needs? When does this number become too high? Or to put it another way, do fields such as medicine, psychology or economics, for example, already have a sufficient number of high quality international journals that it is impossible for other (newly established) journals to be indexed in the Scopus database? Is a journal

that addresses the marginalised field of adult education profitable enough for multinational publishing giants that make huge profits off the shoulders of academics, researchers, editorial boards and reviewers in the commercial scholarly publishing industry?

By opening its doors to the international community, *Studies in Adult Education and Learning* has created a space for academics and researchers in the field of adult education who do not come from the dominant Anglo-Saxon area (which dominates adult education in terms of both the number of journals and authors) to speak about their national academic traditions, practical and cultural experiences, which are becoming more and more marginal due to the global dominance of Anglo-Saxon (academic) culture (cf. Fejes et al., 2019). Although the editorial direction of *Studies in Adult Education and Learning* is aligned with the principles of scientific publication by including foreign authors and publishing in English, it at the same time continues to encourage and nurture Slovenian adult education and its field-specific language by publishing both established domestic authors as well as young (doctoral) researchers and practitioners.

On the occasion of the journal's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we would like to express our gratitude to all of our authors, readers, reviewers, editors, editorial boards and publishers. Thank you for helping the journal reach this important milestone. To mark the occasion, we cordially invite you to read an interview with the editors, in which we discuss the past, present and future challenges of publishing an adult education journal, as well as the current thematic issue entitled *Towards Lifelong Learning and Leaving No One Behind: Rethinking the Role of Adult Education Stakeholders for a Sustainable Future*.

*Borut Mikulec, Editor in Chief*

*Tadej Košmerl, Technical Editor*

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