

## A comparative analysis of the Austrian model of formation of competence

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The chapter explores PIAAC for explorations of broad comparative questions: How are structural traits of education systems related to their results in terms of the PIAAC competence scores and their distribution? Can we trace signs of past reforms in the measured competences?

Questions of this kind are important for the Austrian education policy: Firstly, Austria has retained a quite specific and unique educational structure, whose consequences for the formation of competences seem highly interesting; secondly this analysis might bring some evidence to the chronic Austrian debates about necessary reforms of education, which are only loosely related to evidence, however. The analysis points to the fact, that a closer look at the relationship of the stock of competences in the population displays very long-term and deflected results of education policy.

The comprehensive screening of the data has brought about some quite unexpected and astonishing results, which deserve more attention in future research:

- One is that the relationship between tertiarisation of education and competences seems much more loosely than expected;
- Moreover, contrary to widely held views, the linkage between a formally and organizationally tracked system of competence formation and the inequalities in the distribution of competences seems not much stronger than in ‘comprehensive’ systems; this is due to the fact, that the latter are often also strongly differentiated in a more hidden manner;
- The juxtaposition of reforms and competences in the different countries points to astonishing detrimental effects of today’s dominating, and also in Austria positively adopted neoliberal reform approaches of New Public Management and the (high stakes) education standards movement.

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