

Gender differences in further training participation: The role of individuals, households and firms

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- Abstract -

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To cope with the challenges of the ongoing structural, technological and demographic change, further training is an appropriate instrument which is reflected by the fact that lifelong learning is a highly discussed policy issue. A well-directed policy has to go beyond solely increasing overall participation rates since the determinants of training differ between persons. It is crucial to know details about training participation behavior of different subgroups of employees, such as males and females. It is of further importance whether they are treated differently by employers in order to assure them of the opportunity to perform well in a changing economy.

Using the SOEP, this paper investigates two types of further training, self-initiated and employer-initiated training, for a sample of couples. Self-initiated training is considered a decision within households rather than purely individual. Therefore, in addition to standard training determinants, information on one's own and partner's time use and on partner's personal background and his job are included. A particular focus is on gender differences.

The results show that there are hardly any gender differences regarding the correlation of training determinants and the probability of participation in self-initiated training. This finding suggests that, when it comes to courses that individuals mostly decide themselves to participate in, the factors influencing that decision do not differ significantly between the sexes. Regarding employer-initiated training, however, the correlations of e.g. time use variables and training probability differ significantly by gender: Women's training probability is correlated with the time use of their partner while this is not true for men which supports traditional gender role behavior.

A decomposition analysis suggests that the converse gender gaps in self-initiated (higher among women) and employer-initiated training (higher among men) can both be explained by observable characteristics. In the case of employer-provided training, the findings support the important contribution of own and partner's time use variables to explaining the gap.

JEL-Classification: I29, J16, J24

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