

No Future, No Training? Explaining cross-national variation in the effect of job tasks on training participation

Martin Ehlert (Berlin Social Science Center (WZB))

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Access to further training among adults on the labor market is unequally distributed. Especially workers in occupations that are likely to be replaced by machines in the future participate less in training. This is mainly due to the job tasks they conduct: Workers conducting routine tasks are both more likely to be replaced and receive less training. As a consequence, technological change may lead to further polarization on the labor market. However, this trend may be cushioned by educational and labor market institutions. To assess the impact of institutions, I analyze the association between job tasks and participation in non-formal job-related training in 24 countries from the first and second round of the Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC). I apply multilevel regression analysis to test the influence of macro variables on the task gradient in training. The results reveal that tasks are important predictors of training participation in all countries. Comparing the effects across countries, I find that tracking in initial education increases inequality in training participation due to abstract tasks. Vocational orientation on the other hand reduces the effect. Furthermore, collective bargaining coverage decreases the effects of tasks on training while strong employment protection legislation increases them. This indicates that the inclusiveness of lifelong learning is already influenced by the initial educational system. Strong unions and dynamic labor markets further enhance access to further training among vulnerable workers.