

Gender disparities in further education – the role of family formation

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Previous research has highlighted the relevance of non-formal training for lifelong learning. In Germany, short non-formal training courses are the most common form of further education. Employer-provided training makes up the majority of courses, so that training opportunities also vary by occupation and firm context. Participation in further education therefore depends not only on individual employment participation but also the sector and interests of the employer. Previous research has so far found comparatively small gender inequalities in non-formal further education. However, these studies seem to have largely overlooked whether and to which extent gender disparities in further education are driven by family formation and associated changes in maternal employment participation following childbirth. Moreover, Germany has implemented various family policy reforms aimed at increasing maternal employment. Using large-scale panel data, this study contributes to the literature by (1) investigating the role of childbirth and associated changes in work and family life for gender inequalities in further training and (2) examining whether employment-oriented work-family policies may reduce these observed disparities. The analysis uses data from the National Educational Panel Study (NEPS): Starting Cohort Adults and applies linear probability models in a fixed-effects framework. Preliminary findings show that during the first 6 years after the birth of a child, mothers are less likely to participate in further training compared to childless respondents. In addition, the first results point towards smaller gender inequalities when employment oriented family policies support maternal employment and return-to-work behaviour after childbirth.