

Knowledge and Job Opportunities in a Gender Perspective: Insights from Italy

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JEL CODES: J24, J16, C43, J71, C14

KEYWORDS: gender differentials, returns to knowledge, human capital

ABSTRACT:

This paper proposes a modification and enlargement of the traditional concept of human capital, which we will refer to as “knowledge”, by considering some formal and informal skills (such as the ability to efficiently use Information and Communication Technologies, and financial literacy) and job and labor market related skills (i.e. off-job training, tenure, labor market experience, etc.), to complement the more traditional analyses of education and on-the-job training.

By considering the case of Italy, we then estimate the joint impact of “knowledge” and other individual and household’s characteristics on men’s and women’s employment status and wages.

The results point out that despite much rhetoric and expectations about the fact that women have gradually overcome men in terms of educational attainments, they still lag behind in terms of the main skills and competencies that can profitably be used in the market.

In particular, women lack both general and specific knowledge related to the labor market, as measured by tenure and labor market attachment, whose accumulation is mostly constrained by unpaid work and care-related burdens. Moreover, gender segregation in education seems to be still a relevant issue, by compressing both women’s employment chances and wages.

Thus educational and cultural policies aimed at overcoming traditional gender roles and images among the younger students seem a very sensible policy option.

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