

Chapter 10

Education Attainment and Feminization of Labor Markets in Arab Countries with Comparisons to Eastern and Central European Countries

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ABSTRACT

The feminization of labor markets through the role of education is among the means that enhance the participation of women to development and ensure further involvement of human resources in the growth and development processes. While this is a process that is highly pursued in most developed economies, it is not clearly seen to be pervasive in most developing countries. The Arab economies are among those countries where lower participation of women is observed but where education can be an important leverage for further feminization of labor markets. These issues are discussed in the present chapter to underline the role of education in Arab economies.

INTRODUCTION

The feminization of labor markets through the role of education is among the means that enhances the participation of women to development and ensures further involvement of human resources in the growth and development processes. While this is a process that is highly pursued in most

developed economies, it is not clearly seen to be pervasive in most developing countries. The Arab economies are among those countries where lower participation of women is observed but where education can be an important leverage for further feminization of labor markets.

One of the main determinants for obtaining a specific job nowadays is one's educational level.

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Therefore to study the workforce characteristics, one should start from taking a look at education. For a long time, accessing school has been an issue in the Arab world. Girls have particularly suffered from this issue and efforts have been made to overcome it (Sika, 2011). This higher emphasis on females' participation in education on all levels has led to a new phenomenon in the labor market.

Feminization is the new term for the growing contribution of females in the job market in the past decades. Standing (1999) was the first one to look into this phenomenon in the late twentieth century in global economy. He detected that "the pattern of employment tends to result in an increasing proportion of women occupying the jobs" (p. 583). However, the Arab world was not studied separately in this research and may present different conclusions than Standing's. This paper aims to first develop an empirical model that would link feminization of the job market from the stages of education. Second, it will identify the trends of females' education in the past years to support the underlying assumptions underlying the model. Next, it will tackle the empirical methods used to match statistics in the Arab world to the approach discussed. Finally, the empirical analysis will test the hypothesis that explains how feminization of labor in the Arab world is achieved. This chapter follows the work of Patterson on Turkey and Saudi Arabia (2013) besides the most recent paper of Filali Adib, Driouchi and Achehboune (2013).

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

It took several years of governments' initiatives and efforts to insert girls in the modern schooling system of Arab countries. This is well expressed when analyzing Barro and Lee databases (2010) where the average years of schooling of females has been increasing over the 1950-2010 period. This trend has been concerning primary, secondary and tertiary education of females. These data

show also a decreasing gender gap but this is still present even under these major changes. The tables in chapter 2 of the present book, indicating time trends for total and for females illustrate clearly the increasing pattern of schooling progress among females in Arab countries. But, the speed of change appears to be lower than the one prevailing in Eastern and Central European Economies. More efforts are consequently needed from Arab countries with series of initiatives developed to include more women in education.

The article "The Millennium Development Goals: Prospects for Gender Equality in the Arab World" by Nadine Sika (2011) provides evidence for the lower access to schooling faced by Arab girls. It states numbers for illiteracy rates of females and males in the Arab World with the tendency of higher illiteracy rate for females. The article discusses the emergence of girls' schools with their assumed role in education. Another interesting point that this article raises is that accessing schools is harder for girls due to implicit legal and social practices. Moreover, the author provides support to the premise of women's increasing relatively higher performance in the educational system. However, these high potential shown by females in school, do not appear to be translated significantly in more positions in the job market. These trends are clearly indicated by the existing data on unemployment by gender throughout the Arab economies as reported by International Labor Organization (ILO, 2009) and World bank databases.

Even with higher school enrollment rates, Arab countries still need to tackle the dropout problem. The Dubai school inspection bureau annual report (2010) presents statistics for enrollment and dropout rates in Dubai for the past years. Then it moves to a case-by-case analysis for private, public, and language school. It assesses the performance of the country's school system and the evolution of its education. This report comes after two rounds of school inspections the bureau went through. Therefore, it shades the light on the changes that

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