

Gender-influenced Parents' Investment in Children's Education ¹

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Abstract: The paper focuses on gender-influenced differences in parents' social, time, economic and emotional investment in their children's education. The study is based on various articles and publications, predominantly from the USA, that could guide the direction for further investigation in the field. In the Czech Republic, this type of study is still scarce. Current papers focus mostly on influence of the education system itself, differences in learning abilities or ideas about the future professional path. Needless to say, the subject of influence of the parental investment on children's educational performance is not investigated. The study shows, especially on the example of the USA, that parents participate more in the education of their daughters, in terms of parental involvement (in some aspects) and financial transfers. These findings are then compared to the situation in economically similar countries of the South-East Asia, where the traditional patriarchal system of upbringing children is still very strong and influences the educational aspirations of boy and girl students. The discussed studies and their findings support the claim of gender differentiation in educational support, when it comes not only to financial transfers or emotional investment, but also the choice of school subjects.

Keywords: gender, parental support, culture

Expectations of men and women in industrial societies, since the development of a market economy, had been changing through the times, along with the rights and expectations assigned to both sexes. Nevertheless, academics and political institutions have always been and still are interested in inequality in the labour market and in the education system that the labour market significantly determines. In the last 10 years, Western countries focus less and less on favouring boys but more and more on favouring girls. This paper intends to show, especially in the example of the USA, that parents rather

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more participate in the education of their daughters in terms of parental involvement (in some aspects) and financial transfers. Furthermore, it is also aimed at comparing the situation in the economically similar countries of the South-East Asia, where the traditional patriarchal system of child-rearing is still very strong and influences the educational aspirations of male and female students. Expectations and aspirations, then, differ according to the type of society, although there is a common denominator in the form of economic prosperity and, in the case of studies presented here, also in the form of a large share of the private sector and high financial participation of students in education system.

The paper focuses on parents' social, time, economic and emotional investment in their children education. The study is based on different articles and publications, primarily from the USA that could imply the direction for further research of this kind to follow. In the Czech Republic, a study of this type is still missing. As current papers focus mostly on influence of education system itself (Šmídová, Janoušková, & Katrňák, 2008; Matějů & Straková, 2006), differences in learning abilities (Palečková & Tomášek, 2005) or ideas about the future professional path (Straková et al., 2002), the subject of the influence of the parental environment simply do not exist. What is more, those studies are not very common in other EU countries, what might be caused by different funding of education system, than in the already mentioned USA or Japan. Despite those differences, the education system in the Czech Republic is not fully funded by the state. Due to this fact, the subject of parental investment (not only economic) into their children's education should not be omitted by sociologists or specialists in the field of education policy.

If we take into consideration the final outcomes of education systems, presenting achieved results that later enable men and women to succeed in the labour market, in our sociocultural context, there are huge discrepancies between EU countries (according to PISA or OECD statistics), when it comes to boys' and girls' skills. Even if girls achieve the same or even higher degree, they are still underrepresented in fields such as mathematics or information technology. The differences in skills between boys and girls become higher and higher throughout the educational path – girls gradually fall behind in science and mathematics, while gaining in reading literacy (PISA, TIMMS). The only exception to this rule is Iceland. The same situation can be found in the Czech Republic, where girls are more ambitious, as far as education is

concerned, than boys. When we consider high school classifications, girls have greater chances to attend tertiary education and achieve better school results (even in mathematics, although they still lag behind boys in standardized proficiency tests). Therefore girls are favoured in the school classification, due to the fact that their assessment does not match the measured abilities – grading does not reflect students' abilities and fails to serve one of its primary functions (Straková et al., 2002). Favouring girls in schools might influence their “first unsuccess” against boys during the entrance exams at universities and then on labour market in all. This could be caused by the situation in which boys are forced to invest more to achieve the same grades, what makes them more prepared to undergo stressful situations and competition, both at university and on labour market. This example illustrates how education system, along with its components, influences educational aspirations and movement in the labour market. In the present paper, we would like to focus mainly on the family's influence (time and financial investments; personal parental involvement in the education of their children), as its significance is of the same value as the processes described above. Since the ongoing trends towards marketization of the Czech education system and discussions over its privatisation is observed, parents' investments to their children's education may become a similarly important issue, as it takes place now in the academic field of economically advanced countries with high levels of students' financial participation and private education sector.

1 Gender roles as one of the determinants of educational aspirations

The evolutionary theory of gender says that different reproduction roles imply different expectations on men and women, which leads to stereotypically perceived gender roles, in which men are individually more competitive and violent, while women are more devoted to childcare. Social theories of gender claim that gender roles are the result of psychological differences between the sexes, caused by contrasts between the social roles of men and women. Whereas social cognitive theory of gender maintains that the gender development of children runs through observing and imitating the behaviour of women and men (Doosje, Rojahn, & Fischer, 1999). Gender roles are also significant while talking about the quality of marriage. There are marriages in which both partners are equal, but also there are traditional couples, where a husband takes the role of breadwinner while the wife is a housewife,

without the possibility to work outside her household. Proponents of the traditional division of roles strongly differentiate between gender roles, responsibilities of both sexes, their needs and preferences. It is natural for them to compare themselves with individuals of the same sex (Vanyperen & Buunk, 1991).

Gender stereotypes mean that people apply gender patterns of behaviour to all people who are situationally defined as men and women. It can be observed when women are supposed to be more emotional, sentimental, solidary and caring, whereas men are supposed to have more instrumental features – they act in order to achieve their individual goals, they are more focused on their own interests, they are assertive and motivated to win (Block, 1973). Feminine stereotypes describe women as kind, gentle, appreciative and sensitive, but also negatively as weak, persistent or constantly complaining about something. On the other side, masculine stereotypes frame men as strong, aggressive, ambitious individuals, but also as pompous, rude or impertinent (Williams & Bennett, 1975; Diekman & Eagly, 2000). The perspective to treat women as caring housewives was idealised in 1950's and became the outcome of the industrialisation processes of XIX century. Gerson and Peiss (1985), indicate that industrial development during this era resulted in the social, physical and economic isolation of public and private spheres of life. Traditional female roles, in which a woman does the housework and is dedicated to taking care of children, were associated with low levels of prestige and negative values in comparison with the male roles (Riley, 2003; Bernard, 1981). The role of men in many societies has been, and in some countries still is, associated with the idea that these are men who provide sustenance for the family. This lead to the further implication that this is the reason why they are mainly involved in the labour market and earning money for the necessary fulfilment of the life needs of their families. Such perceptions of men and women can affect various spheres of life, hence the differentiation of children based on sex. The idea of women destined for childcare and household may disadvantage girls against their sibling brothers, from whom it is expected to support the family and what allows them to fully dedicate themselves to the pursuit of their career.

Attitudes towards gender roles are influenced by various social and individual expectations and reasons. Parents, teachers, peers, history, sociology, marriage, casual language and mass media reproduce the patterns

and stereotypes that affect individual choices. All people are trying to act and behave accordingly to their sex, in order to gain acceptance and respect in society. With the growing economic power of women, their education, social interactions outside the home and the influence of mass media, stereotypes and attitudes towards gender roles have changed throughout the world. Women have become more active in the labour market and in academic environment. This change also affects the position of women in society and in the household. Men and women have begun to share more of their duties both at home and outside. The women's rights movement trying to break the traditional concept of men's and women's roles in society has become a leading voice in the battle.

2 A different approach to children and sex-typing

Although parents may not prefer one gender over another, they still believe that sons and daughters should behave differently. And even if parents believe that children should be treated equally, regardless of gender, in fact, may raise children in a stereotypically biased way (Raley & Bianchi, 2006). Parents, therefore, may not even be aware of the differences in their treatment of children and their gender stereotypes may occur, for example, during leisure activities or housework. We can, thus, conclude that parents in this way shape their children's gender-stereotyped behaviour. McHale, Tucker, and Crouter (1999) proved striking differences between girls and boys in the period of middle childhood, but the gender differences were more systematic in children's activities and interests rather than in their personal qualities and attitudes.

Since children's behaviour patterns and preferences are significant, because children practice different types of skills (e.g. sewing vs. soccer) and are exposed to different occasions, the sex-typing may have long and extensive developmental consequences. The very notion of sex-typing is defined differently by different theoretical approaches. Evolutionary and sociocultural models perceive sex-typing as a non-literal assignment of gender roles, on which the socialization of sexes and different behaviour patterns are expected to depend, such as childcare from women and food provision or protection from men (Hoffman, 1977). Those attributions change over time and are dependent on social norms, but in general, we can say that typed people (sex-typed individuals) attribute a high degree of masculine or feminine

characteristics to themselves, but just few characteristics to the opposite sex (Bem, 1981). However, it should be kept in mind that typed behaviour may be based on already existing child's preferences. For father, it is less likely to give a doll to a one-year boy, but boys can play with dolls less than girls, even assuming that they are given dolls (Snow, Maccoby, & Jacklin, 1983).

The American studies show significantly strong influence of parents on the internalisation of gender-typical activities carried out by children, while fathers tend to make differences between children's sexes more than mothers (Lytton & Romney, 1991). As these findings are not compared to any other foreign study, it is not possible to conduct sufficient regional comparisons.

As Shelly Lundberg (2006) noted, a number of factors contribute to the fact that parents behave differently towards boys and girls. Parents and children of the same sex may achieve the symbiosis of interests more easily. If fathers want more to have sons than daughters, mothers can see the birth of a son as a way to strengthen the marriage bond (Lundberg, 2006). Parents may assume that boys need fathers as role models more than girls, and this may have an impact on higher number of interactions in a pair of father and son versus in a pair of father and daughter. Due to certain economic achievements between the sexes among adults in the past, parents may assume that one sex, usually male, will be economically successful in the future, and therefore, it might encourage them to pursue certain types of investments (such as investments in education or time investment).

3 Parental investment in their children's education in advanced economies with a big private sector share

First, we would like to proceed with discussing a few studies conducted in the USA. Carter and Wojtkiewicz's research (2000) examines, whether the parents are twofold involved in the education process of their adolescent sons and daughters. The study uses data from a longitudinal study NELS that collects information from approximately 25,000 American students.

Parental involvement is important for the achieved education level of their children, as parents are the ones who influence the most what the future career of their children will look like. The main hypothesis, based on the literature, assumes that parents are more involved in the education process of their growing sons than of daughters.

Parental involvement was represented by the following dependent variables: discussion about school, parents' expectations, communication between parents and school, parental supervision and parental participation in school events. Indexes, later checked by control analysis, were created for the following variables: discussion about school, communication between parents and school. Academic factors served as control independent variables: grading (students' self-assessment in core subjects), test scores (scores constructed according to the results of tests in reading and mathematics), and students' educational aspirations.

All of these variables (including sex as variable) were gathered together in a logistic regression. The regression results show that, when it comes to education, parents have high expectations of their daughters due to the situation in the labour market, where higher education is a pre-condition for obtaining a well-paid job. The model confirmed the hypothesis that parents are more directly involved in the education of their sons (communication with school). However, these results did not prove whether the phenomenon is the result of other factors, such as poor outside school behaviour of boys. Regarding parental supervision, research has shown that parents check the homework of their sons more often than that of their daughters, which can be explained by higher responsibility expectations from daughters in fulfilment of school duties. On the other hand, parents are more likely to participate in school activities of their daughters. This result is related to academic factors indicating that girls are better than boys as students, and, therefore, parents prefer to attend their school events.

Overall, the research showed that in terms of education, parents treat their sons and daughters differently. But the treatment is not directly focused only on one sex. In some areas, parents are more focused on sons and in others on daughters. The author himself says that there are many possible interpretations of why parents in the US slightly favour their daughters (in four out of seven examined scales) in education process (Carter & Wojtkiewicz, 2000). One of the factors may be social changes that have occurred in connection with higher marriageable age and higher divorce rates. As the percentage of single mothers is increasing, education is then a guarantee that girls will be able to take care of themselves in the future, without the support of a male partner. Parents may also see greater difficulty in achieving success by women in labour market, due to the traditional underestimation and financial understatement of women. This research

might become an inspiration for the situation in the Czech Republic, where the emancipation of women is still not as strong as in the US or in developed European democracies. It would be worth to find out, if there are also higher educational expectations from girls than from boys, in order to prepare them to be more competitive in the labour market.

Wong's recent study (2013) differs from previous studies in a way that it conducts the comparison between countries with significantly different traditions of upbringing children – the USA and South Korea. The author compares the extent of gender preference in the intergenerational transfer of economic resources from parents to children in geographically and culturally diverse areas. The study showed that there is a higher preference for boys expressed by more generous interpersonal transfers. Gender imbalance has been empirically investigated on economic investment in education. Wong's supposition was that the child of a preferred sex has bigger consumption needs than a child of the opposite sex, and that investment in education is bigger among children with higher income opportunities on labour market, regardless of gender preference. Gender bias in interpersonal transfers (finance and goods) is, therefore, dependent on differences in income opportunities and preferred levels of consumption by children across the sexes. The degree of gender preference was compared across several samples of families in the United States and South Korea, which is two geographically and culturally diverse areas. In the US, parent respondents were people over 50, in South Korea over 45 years old. Empirical results proved that financial transfers in Korean families (regular and occasional expenses – may be a gift or a loan, the aim is not important) are biased towards sons, and that the level of educational achievements among sons is higher as well. The results, thus, generally reveal a higher preference for male offspring than female. On the contrary, the empirical evidence did not support the preference for sons among families in the United States. Instead, it turned out that daughters usually achieve higher education degrees and gain greater investment in education and bigger financial transfers, which on the whole supports the preference for daughters versus sons.

Children in the US are more likely to obtain any type of financial transfer in comparison to children in South Korea (14.84 % vs. 6.59 %). Boys in Korea and girls in the US are more likely to receive financial transfers than children of the opposite sex. American sample results showed that boys have a higher probability of educational categories under a university education,

but are less likely to graduate from higher schooling or complete graduate studies. American sons more often than daughters are not supported by parents. Among boys, it is less likely to have at least some of the university expenses covered by parents. The level of financial transfers among the sons is \$ 3,158 lower comparing to daughters. These findings, therefore, support Wojtkiewicz and Carter's findings (2000), that daughters in the US are supported more in education than boys.

Wong explains this disparity by the increased enrollment rate of male applicants at universities, which began to grow in the 1970s and is still observable. Also, financial transfers (during children's life course), as well as achieved degree, are in favour of men. The estimated difference between sons and daughters varies from \$ 3,287 to \$ 7,396.

There are many reasons for these gender differences in education. Educational imbalance in favour of men (husband) is in line with the cultural norm of the patriarchal family system, which is present in Asian countries and favours men as heads of households. In the traditional patriarchal family system, parents invest a relatively small amount of resources (both financial and psychological) in daughters, who leave their family of origin, and join the family of her husband (Wong, 2013). Even in East Asian families in which there are no boys, educational investment in daughters is not higher (Lee, 2009). Cultural conditionality is therefore a very important factor while examining gender imbalance. Korean traditional society supports more unequal treatment of men and women, whereas American society is not so rigid and is nowadays more open to the greater emancipation of women.

This theory is supported by Ono's study (2004), investigating families' allocation of resources based on sex. Despite an overall expansion of university education after the Second World War in Japan, disparities remain between women and men in the access to higher education. Although high school, regardless of gender, is attended by 90% of individuals since 1975, there are still differences between men and women wishing to continue their education at the tertiary level. Ono analyses some of the causes for gender inequality in educational attainment in Japan. The emphasis is put on the socio-institutional environment, which women go through and which limits their aspirations. The decline in educational aspirations is passed from generation to generation by the mechanisms of mothers reproducing their lower educational aspirations on their daughters (Ono, 2004). In a family

environment, where parents more strongly support the higher education of their sons than of their daughters, resources are allocated to promote sons' career.

Ono gives three reasons why women are underrepresented in Japanese higher education. First, the rate of return on investment in higher education for women may be lower than for men (however this is not confirmed by statistics). Parents, as one of the sponsors of education of their children, may perceive that the investment in higher education will be more profitable from their sons than from their daughters. The second possible explanation is that the gap in educational attainment between men and women reflect differences in the demand for skills in the gender-segregated Japanese labour market. Men are more probable to be placed in the primary labour market, where they receive training and where the income is related to length of service. Although women's participation in the labour market in Japan now exceeds 50 %, share comparable with the Western countries, most of these women are included in the secondary labour market, where there are positions with the limited expertise. As employers are afraid of losing women after getting married or losing their investment in education, many women are not offered permanent job contracts but only temporary ones. And thirdly, women's desire to pursue higher education can be limited due to their subsequent "over-education" that may cause complications for placement on labour market or getting married. In Japan, men are more likely to marry women with a lower education level (Ono, 2004). Well-educated women might be perceived as a threat to Japanese patriarchy based on the traditional perception of the roles of women and men.

Ono examined relations between the number of siblings, social origins and university attendance. The results confirm the assumption that a bigger number of siblings reduces the chance to enter higher education. The probability of women to attend the university is significantly lower comparing to men. Moreover, the individuals from families with higher SES are more likely to enter the university.

The result of logistic regression shows that family resources are diverted from the daughters toward sons. For women, the effect of another brother is significant and negative compared to men, but the effect of another sister is not significant. This relationship shows that the negative impact of another brother on university attendance is more visible among women.

However, in the case of women, the number of siblings is not important as such. What counts is the number of brothers, which strongly determines their future education at university (Ono, 2004). The findings suggest that resources within households are allocated in favour of sons, and another brother reduces the chances of daughters to proceed with education after high school, because the household resources are allocated to support the education of male siblings.

Kristen Lee (2009) conducted a study related to Ono and confirmed Ono's conclusions and stated that women and men in Japan are supported differently and, therefore, they do not have equal chances for success on labour market. Notwithstanding, she has also found out one more significant thing – Japanese girls can benefit from the presence of their university-educated male sibling. It does not depend so much on the presence of the brother himself, but on the level of his education. If a brother attends tertiary education, this fact increases the likelihood of his sister also entering university. Lee also confirmed the previous findings that the richer parents are, the higher the chances for offspring to go to university, and that the number of siblings also decreases the level of education of children (Lee, 2009).

4 Conclusion

In this paper we showed studies from Japan and South Korea because these countries are well comparable with the US and developed European countries. Japan and South Korea are countries with advanced industry and economies, where companies are extremely competitive also on the global market. Yet these countries are different in their concept of family, social norms and institutions, which makes them good candidates for geographic comparisons.

The results of these studies showed that parents tend to help their sons and daughters on their educational path differently. On the one hand, parents have higher expectations from the education of their daughters and discuss school matters more often with them. On the other hand, they underestimate their daughters, regarding their potential for scientific achievements in science in general (Freese & Powell, 1999). This is one of the reasons why more financial resources in some countries are distributed among sons rather than among daughters. This increased economic support, however, does not explicitly indicate better educational achievements, since educational

success is determined by a complex of different factors, where financial support is just one of them.

The evidence for gender differentiation of preferences is also present in the selection of school subjects by young children. Parents of sons choose fewer foreign language courses against mathematics or natural science subjects, while parents of daughters less often choose subjects of science and mathematics against foreign languages. It indicates that parents' decision is based on gender stereotypes.

5 Summary

The paper focuses on parents' social, time, economic and emotional investment in their children's education. The study is based on different articles and publications, mostly from the USA, that could imply the direction for further investigation in the field. In the Czech Republic, this type of study is still lacking, when current papers focus mostly on: the influence of education system itself, differences in learning abilities or ideas about the future professional path. Needless to say, the subject of the influence of the parental environment on children's educational performance simply does not exist.

The aim of the paper is to show, especially in the example of the USA, that parents participate more in the education of their daughters in terms of parental involvement (in some aspects) and financial transfers. Furthermore, it is also a study is also aimed at comparing the situation in the economically similar countries of the South-East Asia, where traditional patriarchal system of upbringing children is still very strong and influences the educational aspirations of boy and girl students. Expectations and aspirations, then, differ according to the type of society, although there is a common denominator in a form of economic prosperity and, in the case of studies presented here, also in a form of a large share of private sector and high financial participation of students in the education system.

The discussed studies and their results support the thesis of gender differentiation in educational support, when it comes not only to financial transfers or emotional investment, but also the choice of school subjects.

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Vliv genderu na investice rodičů do vzdělávání dětí

Abstrakt: Studie se soustředí na problém genderových rozdílů v sociálních, časových, ekonomických a emočních investicích rodičů do vzdělávání svých dětí (synů versus dcer). Studie navazuje na články, zejména americké provenience, které by mohly naznačovat další směřování výzkumu v této oblasti. V České republice tento typ výzkumu prozatím chybí; výzkumné projekty se soustředí zejména na vliv vzdělávacího systému jako takového, rozdíly ve schopnostech a v představách o budoucí kariéře. Vliv rodičů na výsledky vzdělávání synů a dcer není tematizován. Tato studie ukazuje, zejména na příkladu Spojených států amerických, že rodiče více participují (co se týče zapojení a finanční podpory) na vzdělávání dcer. Dále se pokouší srovnat tuto zjištění se situací v ekonomicky podobně vyspělých, ale kulturně odlišných zemích jihovýchodní Asie. Zde je stále silný tradiční patriarchální systém výchovy dětí, který má vliv na vzdělávací aspirace žákyň a žáků. Výzkumy, které jsou v naší studii diskutovány, podporují tezi o genderových rozdílech v podpoře vzdělávání, nejen co se týče finančních toků a emočních investic, ale i co se týče výběru školních předmětů.

Klíčová slova: gender, podpora rodičů, kultura