Economic Return of Education in a Multicultural Setting:

African Female Migrants from a Comparative Perspective

Yaghoob Foroutan, PhD[1]

Yaghoob.Foroutan@anu.edu.au or y_Foroutan@yahoo.com

McDonald (2000) in explaining gender equity theory demonstrates - women's - market employment and education as examples of institutions dealing with people as individuals existing in very low fertility countries where the levels of gender equity are also higher, compared with countries predominated with the institutions in which people are dealt as members of families. The present paper, indeed, has a central focus on both education and employment of women.

This paper examines the economic outcome of education in comparison with other competing characteristics affecting women's market employment. This examination is conducted in a comparative perspective among women living in the Australian multicultural context with a wide range of ethnic groups from throughout the world in which African female migrants have been given specific attention.

The paper is an empirical investigation in the course of finding out answers for such key questions as: Does really education provide equal economic outcomes?; more specifically, Where is the place of education in the success of African female migrants in this multicultural context, compared with the native-born and other ethnic groups such as those with European or Asian background? How important is the influence of education on women's market employment while other competing determinants are controlled?

Data for this analysis are based on special tabulations of the 2001 Population and Housing Census dealing with all women in economically active ages - that is, 15-54 years. This contains nearly 5.4 million, of whom around 25 per cent are overseas-born. Amongst female African migrants included in the analysis, a relatively greater proportion are those whose countries of origin are South Africa, Egypt, Mauritius, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Zambia, Somalia and Ethiopia. The use of logistic regression analysis enables us to examine the relative impacts of competing implication of each determinant influencing women's market employment highlighted in the literature, particularly educational attainment, while simultaneously controlling for other variables in the models such as family formation, age composition, English skill and migration aspects.