

333 Has the 2014 Quality Reform in Higher Education in Peru Benefited the Development of Women in Academia?

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Research Domains

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

Abstract

This study analyzes the presence of women in the highest categories of the academic career in two prestigious universities in Peru, the Universidad Nacional Mayor de Marcos and the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú. The objective is to investigate the potential effects of the 2014 Quality Policy reform in Higher Education on gender segregation during two specific periods, 2010 and 2019. For this, the following research question was posed: how has the new university policy of 2014 in Peru influenced the progression of women to the highest academic category? The study analyzes the cases of these two universities based on data from the last University Census of 2010 and the Faculty Payroll Reports of the Superintendencia de Educación Universitaria of 2019. Although it is observed through the regression analysis that segregation persists, evidence of odds ratios shows that the probability of promotion of women to the highest category increases.

Full paper

Introduction

This study examines the representation of women in the highest categories of the academic career at two esteemed universities in Peru: the Universidad Nacional Mayor de Marcos (UNMS), the oldest state university, and the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP), the oldest private non-profit university. The analysis is conducted in the context of the changes brought about by the Policy of Quality Assurance in University Education in 2014. The main research question addressed is: How has the 2014 university policy influenced the advancement and access of women to the highest academic categories?

In Peru, the last two university censuses of 1994 and 2010, account for the lower presence of women in the highest category "full professor". Although an increase in the presence of women is observed (from 9% in 1994 to 33% in 2010), this is not consistent with their investment in training and dedication to research (Busse and Barrantes, 2018; Chavez and Ronso, 2021).

According to the idea of human capital, proposed by Becker (1964), there are three fundamental variables that guarantee access to the best job opportunities: work experience; academic training and learning; and, health care. From this perspective, the low presence of women in senior categories could be explained because women accumulate less human capital as their male peers, so their evaluators could choose not to promote a woman, because in the long term it is less productive than hire a man (Nielsen, 2016; O'Connor & O'Hagan, 2016)

On the other hand, Nielsen (2015) points out that the idea of the academic career has as its core the "meritocratic ethos" in which it is presumed that gender has no relevance, because according to its defenders, this system would provide everyone, regardless of their gender, the same opportunities to advance and obtain rewards for their individual merits and efforts. However, the literature on the tenure system poses a control problem when it is conducted by faculty themselves (McPherson & Shapiro, 1999; Bonifaz, 2021), as it grants a form of property right that influences decisions aimed at maintaining the long-term benefits of the evaluators (Brown, 2001).

Method

To examine the status of women faculty members in the academic career at UNMSM and PUCP, a mixed-methods approach has been employed. This approach involves analyzing the distribution of professors based on data from the

University Census 2010 and the 2019 Faculty Payroll database. These findings are then triangulated with an analysis of changes in the requirements and procedures of the academic career following the enactment of the 2014 Law.

In the quantitative analysis, the variables derived from the analytical framework (university, gender, degrees, research, category) were utilized, and the multiple logistic regression model and odds ratio test were applied. The qualitative analysis involved comparing the statutes of the academic career in each case to identify changes in the requirements and procedures resulting from Law 30220.

Findings

For the analysis of the two universities with the data from the 2010 Census (n=3037), at a confidence level of 95%, the model and the independent variables were significant (p-value less than alpha 0.05). The model showed predictive capacity of the dependent variable (academic category), demonstrating that the variable sex=0 (woman) decreases the possibility of climbing from one category to another. In the same way, the odds ratios were obtained, where it was observed that a male professor who has a master's degree (or doctorate) and conducts research is more likely than a woman to be promoted to the highest category.

The same analysis was carried out with the same model and level of confidence, for the two cases (n=3520) with the 2019 Payrolls. With this database, it was observed, again, that a male faculty who has a master's degree (or doctorate) and conducts research are more likely to be promoted than their female peers.

However, the findings highlight that, with the 2019 Payroll data, the value of the odds ratios of these variables change considerably, since for this analysis, the variable "research" obtained the highest value (2.88), followed by the variable "maximum degree" and "sex", variables whose odds ratios decreased by 0.51 and 0.03 points, respectively. This shows that the probabilities of ascending for women improve in 2019 compared to 2010.

In this sense, it can be argued that changes in the "rules of the game" based on the assessment of merits and more transparent processes can benefit women. In turn, it can be affirmed that these changes do not happen spontaneously, but that they respond to new demands raised in university policies in Peru.

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