

Barriers, opportunities and challenges for women in the academy



Roxana Barrantes, IEP researcher, explained that, in the qualitative analysis of the presented research, five characteristics were found about the inequality in the university space. One of them is the thought that certain academic tasks correspond to women and the execution of Tokenism, which consists in granting certain concessions to women to avoid criticism.

According to the World Bank, gender biases can limit women as well as men, but historically they have placed women at a greater disadvantage. This occurs in various areas of the country, including academia, where there are barriers for students, teachers and researchers. In this table three investigations were presented that show and approach the problem from di-

fferent perspectives, offering recommendations to close gaps.

Patricia Ruiz Bravo and Jimena Sánchez, sociologists from the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP), presented the research *Fighting against inequalities towards women: actions and policies fostered in universities*, in which they analyzed the experiences of universities in different coun-

tries with regarding the following axes: closing gaps and combating gender stereotypes; reconcile times for family and work; and the elimination of violence against women within the educational field.

One of the main difficulties encountered was linked to the evaluation. The researchers pointed out that in the few cases that some kind of evaluation is presented, this is usually

1/ The research desk "The situation of women researchers in social sciences in Peru" was co-organized with the Sofia Group. The speakers were Patricia Ruiz Bravo and Jimena Sánchez, from the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP), and Lorena Alcázar and María Balarin, from the Analysis Group for Development (Grade); also, Andrea Román (Grade/IEP), Roxana Barrantes (IEP/PUCP) and Erika Busse (Macalester College). Commentators: Wilson Hernández, from the Universidad de Lima, and Verónica Zapata, from the Ministry of Education. Moderator: Gonzalo Urbina, from Mater Initiative.

done around the fulfillment of tasks and not “of the generated impact”.

The study also showed that the actions related to promoting equality between women and men are mainly focused on the teaching and student staff, and administrative personnel are usually left out. “If the changes are not thought across the entire institution, comprehensive change will not be achieved,” they said, referring to the need to think about gender and equality policies not as isolated issues, but as necessary and influencing the whole population.

The research showed that the actions and policies analyzed in the universities that are the subject of the study tend to focus mainly on violence against women (harassment and sexual harassment), but for most institutions, issues such as eliminating wage gaps or reconciliation between family and work life. At the same time, according to the researchers, there is no question about the barriers that academics have to access higher positions.

While it is true that a man or a woman, when accessing certain positions, must earn the same, what is not often questioned is why there are so few women in managerial positions, a situation that is reflected in the gender inequalities still prevailing in the Higher education institutions. Given this panorama, the PUCP specialists proposed that universities develop deeper diagnoses for the establishment of gender policies, in which the political will, the necessary resources and possible organizational and cultural resistances should be considered. In the same way, as a recommendation, they affirmed that for such a policy to be effective, it is necessary to involve all the components of the university community: authorities, teachers, students, administrative staff, among others.

INEQUITATIVE SPACE FOR TEACHERS AND RESEARCHERS

Lorena Alcázar, María Balarin and Andrea Román, researchers from the

“Si bien es cierto que un hombre o una mujer, al acceder a determinados cargos, deben ganar igual, lo que no suele cuestionarse es por qué hay tan pocas mujeres en posiciones directivas, situación que se refleja en las desigualdades de género aún vigentes en las instituciones de educación superior”.

Development Analysis Group (Grade), presented the study Opportunities and barriers for women researchers and university professors of the social sciences in Peru. This research applied a survey to professionals, men and women teachers and Peruvian researchers from public and private universities (222 women and 235 men), as well as 14 interviews to researchers from four regions (Ayauccho, Cusco, Lima and Piura). Data





from the National University Census 2010 and the National Directory of Researchers and Innovators were also taken into account as secondary sources of information.

The research showed disparities in access to positions and salaries, as well as spaces for academic and media debate.

The majority of women, especially those who have children, fail to hold leadership positions in the university or in research; For example, men occupy the main teaching category to a greater extent (63% men versus 39% women) and have greater access to leadership positions in research (71% versus 53%). This position generates better salary advantages, which are especially marked when women have minor children.

The specialists identified that these differences are generated by three factors: a precarious academic institutional context, division of gender roles in the home and subtle mecha-

nisms of discrimination. Regarding the first factor,

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they explained that within the Peruvian university, mentoring and networks are dominated by men, which is a difficult barrier for women who wish to advance in their academic careers, especially in public universities and in the career of Economy. Regarding the second point, they stated that women dedicate more time than men to household chores and care, which reduces hours to their lei-

sure time, since they have two working days: one within the university and another in their houses. This is evident when tackling motherhood: the majority of women (71%) affirm that they have had to postpone their careers due to this condition. Likewise, one in 10 women affirms that the responsibility of being a mother has been an "obstacle" in their career (11% compared to 2% of men).

Regarding the subtle mechanisms of discrimination, the study detected the existence of models of the ideal academic, linked to the figure of man, which entails the formation of groups of academics in which women are excluded. At the same time, academics find it difficult to establish their authority as professionals and face a typecasting in some issues that are less valued by their male peers, such as gender, education and childhood (while men have greater links with agrarian, macroeconomic issues and State). On this aspect, the investi-

gation revealed that 69% of women felt less valued for their research topics. In sum, this study revealed that the Peruvian university is a space in which teachers and researchers face barriers and masculinized environments, as well as an invisibilization of their academic work.

INEQUALITY IN THE UNIVERSITY

The professor of the Department of Economics of the PUCP and researcher of the Institute of Peruvian Studies (IEP), Roxana Barrantes, and the sociologist of Macalester College, Erika Busse, presented the report. Here there is no gender disparity. Here they all have the same opportunity. Opportunities and barriers for women economy teachers. In this research, they analyzed the possible barriers to the development of the teaching career in Economics for women. It was based on the observation that the number of Economics departments, as well as that of women who choose to study this

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discipline has increased, but there are still few women teachers (in greater numbers in private universities). The researchers found several factors that generate this situation.

In principle, the university work space is dominated by men and it is assumed that they correspond to certain aspects of academic life, such as the leadership work and leadership of the university space, through the management positions. To avoid being labeled as discriminatory, the power structure grants certain concessions to some academics. However, the researchers emphasized, it is not a me-

rit choice. "You are there to fulfill a requirement, not because they want your ideas", is the underlying thought, noted Barrantes and Busse.

The research was nourished by interviews with women teachers of Economics from public and private universities. In the qualitative analysis, they found five characteristics about inequality in the university space: the invisibility of informal practices of discrimination; the existence of a macho culture; the problems of discrimination against women in the career of Economics, which are perceived as an individual issue and not as a collective problem; the social reproduction of hierarchies, which favor men so that they can access positions of power and have better opportunities to access sources of resources or means of communication; the thought that certain academic tasks correspond to women and the execution of Tokenism (grant certain concessions to women to avoid criticism).

COMMENTS

Both Verónica Zapata, director of University Higher Education in the Ministry of Education, and Wilson Hernández, representative of the Universidad de Lima, called attention to the need to continue investigating inequality and discrimination in the university environment. Hernandez suggested asking more questions such as: "Why should teaching be attractive to women? Why do men not see their dominant position?" Finally, Zapata pointed out that greater diversity of gender should be ensured in the committees for the selection, evaluation and promotion of university teaching, in comparison with the current situation, since these are formed mostly by men.