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The Long Road to Equality: University and Gender in Argentina

In the first decades of the 20th century in Argentina, especially in 1918, there was a university reform promoted by the student movement and that promoted the democratization of the universities. However, the massive incorporation of women into the country's national universities is going to arrive almost around the end of the century. Thus, in the first decades of the 21st century, several reforms were produced in most of the Argentine universities, which were promoted by the feminist movement, the women professors and researchers, the students and the administrative workers. The main reforms were the enactment of protocols in cases of violence and / or discrimination based on gender, the creation of gender areas in the administrative and organizational structures of the universities, and the inclusion of parity for the selection of authorities. In this chapter, the latest feminist transformations and reforms in Argentine national universities will be analyzed based on three key areas: (i) violence and discrimination based on gender, (ii) processes of institutionalization of gender areas, and (iii) inclusion of parity for the selection of authorities. Likewise, there will be a brief description of the main inequalities at the university level such as horizontal and vertical segmentation.

Key words: University, XX-XXI century, Argentina, gender-based violence, gender inequality

Дуг пут до једнакости: универзитет и род у Аргентини

Првих деценија XX века у Аргентини, посебно 1918. године, студентски покрет покренуо је универзитетску реформу, у циљу промовисања демократизације универзитета. Међутим, тек крајем XX века дошло је до масовне инкорпорације жена на државне националне универзитете. Стога је у првој деценији XXI века, на већини аргентинских универзитета донешено неколико реформи, промовисаних од стране феминистичких покрета, женских професора и истраживача, студенткиња и административних радница. Фундаменталне реформе биле су спроведене приликом формирања протокола у случају родног насиља и/или родне дискриминације, креирања родних области у административним и организационим структурама универзитета, као и инкорпорације родне једнакости приликом избора на руководеће позиције. У овом чланку, последње феминистичке трансформације и реформе на аргентинским националним универзитетима биће анализирани у оквиру три кључне области: (а) родног насиља и родне дискриминације, (б) процеса институционализације родних области, и (в) укључивања једнакости приликом избора на руководеће позиције. Такође, биће изнет кратак опис основних неједнакости на универзитетском нивоу, како на хоризонталном, тако и на вертикалном.

Кључне речи: Универзитет, Аргентина, XX–XXI век, родно насиље, родна дискриминација

INTRODUCTION

“The big changes happen if we do well (as much or as little) that touches us according to our responsibilities and we influence in the small group of people with whom we interact. If many of us do this, we will have a better and more inclusive society.”

Micaela García¹

¹ Micaela García, was a 21-year-old girl, a member of the Evita Movement and also of the “Ni Una Menos” movement, who was victim of a femicide. The femicide was perpetrated by a person sentenced to a 9-year sentence for the rape of two women, which occurred prior to the rape followed by the femicide of Micaela. In 2019, Law 27,499 (called the Micaela Law) was approved, which establishes mandatory training in gender and gender-based violence for all people who work in public office, in the Executive, Legislative and Judicial branches of the Nation.

In the first decades of the 20th century in Argentina, especially in 1918 within the National University of Córdoba, there was a deep university reform driven by the student movement that promoted the defense of universal and free education as well as the democratization of national universities that had an impact that even transcended its time and borders. However, one of the biggest debts of that reform was that despite the fact that the (few) university women were there studying, supporting and fighting for their incorporation under conditions of equality, they were made invisible and so were their contributions and claims (Pautassi & Balardini 2020; Morgade 2020).

Thus, since 2015, accompanied by the process of massive visibility of the demands of the feminist movement, a new stage began in Argentine national universities that some authors call the second university reform (). The same year, the Interuniversity Network for Gender Equality and Against Violence was created with the integration of more than 20 universities out of a total of 50. The network was created as a space for promoting academic activities, circulation of management experiences and intervention, ideas and proposals for the mainstreaming of the gender perspective in the higher education system. Later, in 2018, the network -called the Interuniversity Network for Gender Equality and Against Violence (RUGE for its in spanish)- managed to institutionalize itself by being incorporated into the National Interuniversity Council (CIN), with the aim of collaborating in the design and development of policies that contribute to eradicate gender inequalities and violence (Torlucci et al. 2019).

On the other hand, although the inclusion of gender issues in the university political and academic agenda began at the beginning of the 20th century, during its last decades there has been an increase and women have been creating research and teaching spaces linked to the “Women’s Studies” and “Feminist Theories” generating a flourishing of postgraduate programs, undergraduate subjects and an increase in the production of knowledge about inequalities and violence for reasons of gender (Vázquez Laba & Rugna 2015 and Femenías 2002). And, in recent years, studies on women’s access to Argentine universities have proliferated (Barrancos 2007; Itati Palermo 2006); the process of gender institutionalization in the Argentine university system (Torlucci et al. 2019), gender-based violence and experiences of implementing institutional devices such as equality plans, protocols and case studies in different universities (Aguilar Ródenas et. al 2009; Aucía 2017; Blanco 2016; Rovetto & Figueroa 2017; Vázquez Laba & Palumbo 2019; Vázquez Laba & Rugna

2015; Mondelli 2017) Along with studies on the participation of women in decision-making spaces, research on the research on the place of women in university governments (Rulli 2019; Kantolick & Gally 2020; Pinto 2020; Arranz 2020; Mera 2020).

Thus, in recent years, women and feminist groups began to promote and promote reforms and new gender policies in universities and higher education institutions: Secretariats, areas and gender programs were created, action protocols were approved in situations of gender-based violence, equality plans, regulations that promote and approve the use of non-sexist inclusive language in the university environment, reforms of electoral systems to include parity in the composition of candidate lists, among other measures.

This chapter analyzes the main advances in gender policies in Argentine national universities as well as pointing out the pending challenges. The chapter is organized in five sections, the first being the present introduction. The second section presents an analysis and data on the sanction of action protocols against gender violence in higher education institutions. Next, in the third section, the process of institutionalization of gender in the Argentine national universities is described, carrying out an analysis with the institutionality at the level of the national State. In the fourth section, an analysis of the horizontal and vertical segmentation in national universities and the advances in the reforms to the systems of election of university authorities is carried out.

2. THE SANCTION OF ACTION PROTOCOLS AGAINST GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

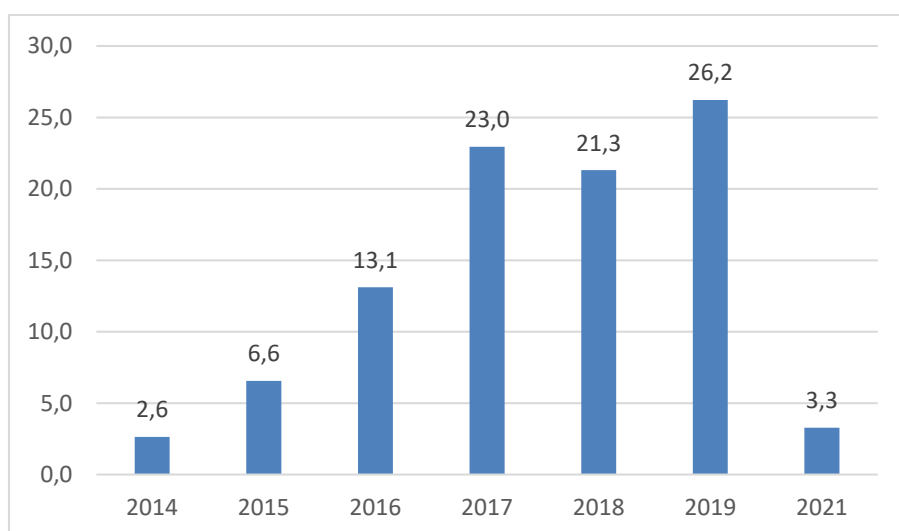
In 2009, Law No. 26,485 on Comprehensive Protection to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women in the areas that develop their interpersonal relationships was sanctioned. The law defines the different types of violence to which women can be subjected: physical, psychological, sexual, economic or patrimonial and symbolic. Likewise, in 2019, political violence was included as a new type (Law No. 27,533). This law establishes different forms of violence: (i) domestic violence; (ii) institutional violence; (iii) workplace violence; (iv) violence against reproductive freedom; (v) obstetric violence and (vi) media violence. In 2019, (vii) violence against women in the public space (Law No. 27,501/19) and (viii) political public violence (Law No. 27,533/19) were incorporated.

Five years later, in 2014, the National University of Comahue was the first to approve an action protocol against gender violence and by 2021,

95% of Argentine national universities had already done so. As can be seen in Graph 1, as of 2015 there was a process of increased approval of this device that grew in step with the massification and visibility of the demands of the feminist movement in the streets and broader political processes. According to Torlucci et. al (2019: 3): “the increase between 2017 and 2018 is linked to the accumulation and political work of university feminists added to the mobilization process that had a clear boom in 2015 with the first “*Ni una Menos*”, then the “stop women’s international” and in 2018 the “scarves” from the debate in the National Congress on the legalization and decriminalization of abortion “.

In 2019, Law 27,499, known as the Micaela Law, was approved in the National Congress, which establishes mandatory gender awareness and training for officials of the three branches of government. A few months after its approval, promoted by the coordination of the RUGE, the National Interuniversity Council adhered to the Micaela Law and promoted its adherence in all national universities to carry out training in all cloisters. Quickly, more than 81.9% of the total of national universities adhered to the law and a little less than half (47.5%) began with the training, mostly to the authorities (31%), the non-teaching faculty (27%) and the teaching and student body (21%) (Ruge 2019 and Torlucci et. al 2019).

Graph 1. Number of protocols approved per year in the Argentine national universities (2014–2021)



Source: DGyDS UNSAM and Ruge 2019 and upated with official webs.

3. INSTITUTIONALLY AND THE PROCESS OF GENDER INSTITUTIONALIZATION IN ARGENTINE NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES

Gender institutionality is made up of a set of international commitments, laws, mechanisms, institutions, actors and people that have made it possible to make visible and institutionalize the problem and the demands linked to gender inequalities in society and the State (Guzmán 2001). Thus, gender institutionality implies the crystallization of political and technical processes that are reflected in the organizational structure for the management of public policies on women's rights and gender equality in all powers and levels of the State.

This process, that of the institutionalization of gender areas in the State, has not been unequivocal, but rather has been a dynamic social and political process permeable to economic, social and cultural changes both internally and internationally that made it possible to recognize the women and LGBTI+ people, promoted by the feminist movement and dissidence. All this journey can be seen in the different advances in the definitions of public policies that have been implemented, from policies for women, those of affirmative action, the incorporation of the gender perspective and more recently those aimed at mainstreaming of gender (Rodríguez Gustá 2008; Payo 2017).

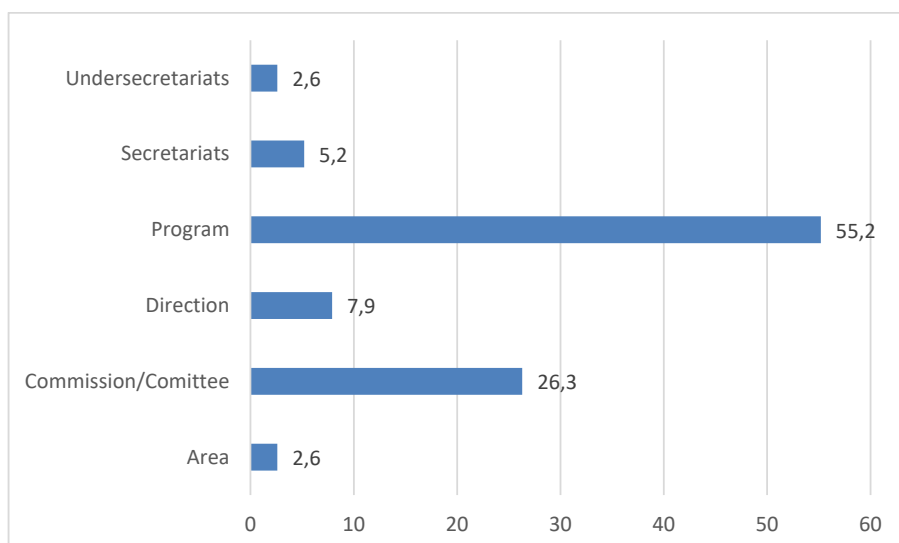
At the level of the national state structure, this process began in 1983 with the transition to democracy when the Program for the Promotion of Women and the Family was created and in 1985 it became the Undersecretary for Women (depending on the Ministry of Health and Social Action of the Nation). In 1992, the National Council for Women was created, reporting directly to the Presidency of the Nation and including in its objectives progress in the fulfillment of the commitments assumed in joining CEDAW. During the 1990s and early 2000s, the areas of gender or women at the subnational level and the capacities of the national State to mainstream the gender perspective were strengthened. In 2009, the National Law No. 26,485 on the Comprehensive Protection of Women was approved to prevent, punish and eradicate violence against women and the National Council for Women was established as the governing body in charge of designing the public policies necessary to enforce the provisions established therein.

Subsequently, in 2017, a process of hierarchization of the institutional framework took place when the National Institute for Women was created (as a decentralized body with the rank of Secretary of State in the orbit of the Ministry of Social Development of the Nation) and the National

Plan of Action for the Prevention, Assistance and Eradication of Violence against Women (2017–2019) and later in 2018, the Plan for Equal Opportunities and Rights (PIOD 2018–2020) with the aim of developing strategic planning and as a tool for mainstreaming gender policies in the country. Finally, in 2019, a new process of hierarchization and expansion of the institutional approach took place when the National Ministry of Women, Gender and Diversity was created, including not only issues of violence but also economic, political, sexual health and diversity autonomy.

At the same time, in the Argentine university system, the process of gender institutionalization has accelerated in recent years: as already mentioned, in 2018 the RUGE was created by institutionalizing it and being incorporated into the Council National Interuniversity. RUGE played a fundamental role in promoting progress in the process of prioritization and professionalization of gender policies within Argentine national universities (Torlucci et. al 2019). More than 60% of the universities have created some type of institutional space for gender, of which, as can be seen in Graph 2, the majority are of the “Program” (55.2%) and “Commission/Committee” range. (26.3%). Only a small percentage has created institutional spaces of a higher hierarchical rank, such as “Secretariats” (5.2%), “Undersecretariats” (2.6%) and “Directors” (7.9%).

Graph 2. Institutionalized gender spaces according to institutional rank



Source: DGyDS UNSAM and Ruge 2019

However, despite the growth in the creation of gender areas in national universities, they do not have adequate funding to be able to design and implement policies. In other words, the existence of institutional spaces does not guarantee that adequate financing and human resources are allocated for their development. Thus, according to data from the RUGE (2019), only 25% of the institutional gender spaces that had been created by 2019 had their own budget and 54% of them have at least one designated person, and of this proportion, 47% 5% have between 2 to 5 people working, which accounts for a consolidated team.

4. CEILING GLASSES AND WALLS AT ARGENTINE NATIONAL UNIVERSITIES

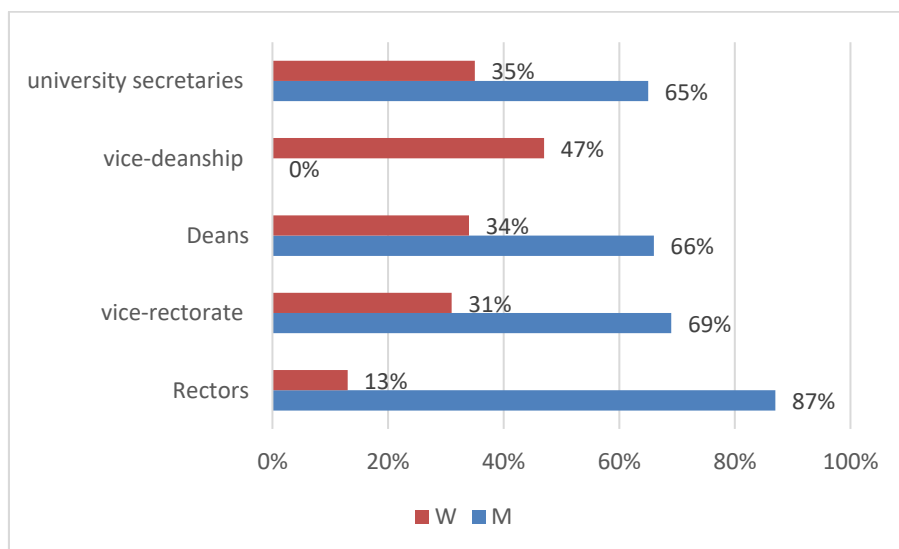
The phenomenon of horizontal and vertical segregation that women face in other areas such as the labor market or in spaces of political participation at all levels of the state, is not alien to university women in Argentina. Thus, according to the Secretary of University Policies (2020), 58% of students in undergraduate and graduate courses, 58.4% of newly enrolled students and 61.1% of graduates of national universities are women. Likewise, the presence of female students predominates in the careers of social sciences, humanities and medical and health sciences.

According to the Ministry of Science, Technology and Productive Innovation (2018), women are the majority of those enrolled in the areas of humanities and arts (60%), social sciences (59.6%) medical and health sciences (74.6%); while men are a majority in the areas of engineering and technology (66.5%), natural and exact sciences (59.8%). The same happens with the distribution of graduates in undergraduate courses, with women being the majority in the areas of knowledge of humanities and arts, social sciences, and medical and health sciences; while men in the areas of engineering and technology, natural and exact sciences and agricultural and veterinary sciences.

In the case of university professors, in the distribution of positions according to sex, a scenario of almost parity is evident: 49.9% of teaching positions are held by women and 50.5% by non-teachers. However, 58.5% of senior authority positions are held by men. In 2019, 87% of the rectors and 66% of the deans were men (highest university authorities in the country). This means that although women represent the same proportion as men in classrooms, corridors and laboratories, they do not occupy the same places in management and decision-making positions. Going down the institutional ladder, inequality decreases slightly in the positions of vice-rectorate (31% women), university secretaries (35% women) and

vice-deanship (47% women). These data show that women's access to the top of the organizational pyramid of political management positions is far from reaching parity (SPU, 2020).

Graph 3. Senior authority positions at the national universities in Argentina.



Source: SPU 2020.

Vertical segregation, known by feminist studies as the glass ceiling, is a phenomenon that expresses the low representation of women in the highest positions of power and in the positions of greatest responsibility in the different areas of work and political participation of women. that university institutions are no strangers. However, in recent years, also hand in hand with political processes linked to parity democracy at the national and subnational levels, progress has been made in universities to incorporate gender parity regulations for the preparation of candidate lists. to councilors for the elections of faculty of all the collegiate bodies, among which the reforms included in the National University of San Martín and the University of Buenos Aires in 2019 stand out.

5. FINAL THOUGHTS: THE LONG ROAD TO EQUALITY

As has been analyzed, the political, institutional and social advances regarding the gender and diversity agenda in the national universities in Argentina have been extensive and proliferate according with reforms at the national level. In recent years, it has been produced many advances

related to the right to a life free from all forms of violence and discrimination, sexual and reproductive rights, civil and political rights and, to a lesser extent, economic, social and cultural rights, especially linked to inequalities in domestic and care work.

In the field of national universities, although there have been advances related to regulations and the creation of institutions, there are still informal practices and rules, sustained in the patriarchal political and cultural system, that hinder the expansion of women's political participation and in the eradication of gender-based violence. However, progress has also been made regarding other relevant issues such as the inclusion of inclusive and non-sexist language in official documents, and the development of care policies in national universities. An example of this is the incorporation of student maternity leave, the creation of children's spaces (such as nurseries, play centers or children's centers) and the granting of scholarships to students with dependent children.

The steps that follow on the path towards equality must be guided by the consolidation of gender institutions, sustainable and adequate financing, and an strong political will.

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