

Debate

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE TEACHING-RESEARCH OF ANATOMY IN MEDICINE:
THE GENDER ISSUE

WOMEN, ANATOMY AND THE GLASS CEILING: SPEECH VS REALITY

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Thinking about an equal society requires the elimination of discriminatory treatment against any group of people.

Beyond the fact that equality between men and women is a naturally assumed fact, it is important to recognize that an unequal society tends to repeat inequality in almost all areas and bodies.

Equal treatment of socially different people cannot by itself be considered to generate equality.

In order to transform higher education, the access to the education is one of the fundamental issues, both in the ability to access to study but also in the practice of teaching.

The discrimination against women can occur in a collective or individual environment, it can be conscious or unconscious, and in general it is closely linked to the customs and traditions of each country and society. Lamas (1996)

Sexism is defined as the set of discriminatory practices that exist both in behaviors and

thoughts, based on beliefs about the gender and the sex of the people.

It is manifested by direct or indirect attacks against women, for example on their ambitions or interests. Such an attack is produced by the enforcement of apparently neutral measures or social rules that have an impact on women. They are less able to withstand their effects or preventing them from fully participating in the activities related to their likes or social characteristics, because they have harmful effects on their work.

Society commonly builds expectations of what men should be and what women should be, consequently, changing these characteristics implies modifying the prolonged situation of marginalization and devaluation of women, removing the burden of responsibility for household chores, insufficient professional training, the introduction of a single model of femininity and, above all, the absence of women themselves recognizing themselves as victims of this discrimination.

Women's access to the higher education system is critical. While in developed countries, access for women surpasses 50%, in countries in transition it is around 35%, and in less developed countries it does not exceed 30%.

With regard to admission to the University of the Eastern Republic of Uruguay (Udelar), in 2018, a form was implemented as part of the FormA project. A tool based on which various statistical data capture operations are implemented with the aim of generating continuous surveys of longitudinal order. According to this project, in 2018, 63.2% of our university population were women, and we have witnessed a growing process of feminization in recent years. The

Area of Technologies and Sciences of Nature and the Habitat is the least feminized (48%). On the other hand, the Social and Artistic Area has a slightly more feminized gender distribution than Udelar as a whole, with the Faculty of Social Sciences standing out with 75% women. Arim (2018)

The Health area, stands out for a very unequal distribution, with 72.3% of its members being female, growing between 2 and 3 percentage points annually since 1988. In short, although there have been changes in the gender composition of the three main fields, the process of horizontal segregation continues, in which women continue to choose careers related to Health and Social Sciences, and more technological and natural science careers are neglected. The current feminization of the medical field should not be understood as a reflection of a scenario of greater gender equity in the formation, teaching and practice of the profession; in fact, some authors argue that the opposite is occurring. The medical field continues to be characterized by a privileged position of men. Rey (2020).

In the practice of medicine, it is men who occupy more leadership and executive positions, who are in the majority in the best-paid medical specialties, and who are consequently paid more per hour of work. At the university level, men also occupy the highest teaching positions to a large extent.

In terms of academic activity in the female gender, a real problem is identified linked to the lack of inclusion of women in teaching. Despite the adherence to the discourse of equality, the academy has traditionally been perceived as patriarchal and elitist, both in its structure and values as well as in its culture.

In the Department and Chair of Anatomy of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of the Republic of Uruguay, the evolution in the inclusion of women in the teaching role, has accompanied the increase seen over the years in relation to the increase of women who opt for a career in medicine, and therefore also in research, since both roles of both go hand in hand.

In order to gain access to teaching positions in the Chair of Anatomy, it is necessary to take part in a competitive examination.

For the first step, grade 1 (Dissector), the competition is by means of a theoretical-practical competitive examination, and it is not possible to enter once the Doctor of Medicine degree has been completed, thus the vast majority of the youngest teachers have not yet graduated.

The second step or grade 2 (Assistant) is accessed through a competition which consists of

4 tests: merit, theoretical, scientific methodology and practice.

The three higher levels are teaching positions, which can be accessed by merit and the presentation of a work project in agreement with the occupied position.

The academic structure of our Chair is composed as follows

- 1 Head Professor, Director of the Department
- 2 Associate Professors
- 4 Assistant Professors
- 12 Assistants
- 24 Dissectors

In relation to the distribution of women in the teaching staff in the last 5 years, we highlight that none has obtained the position of Head Professor (never even in the history of the Chair since 1876).

At the present time there is a vacant position of Associate Professor, which is currently being offered, and the only applicant is a woman, who has been an Assistant Professor for the last 7 years. The only woman to have been promoted to the position of Associate Professor was more than 20 years ago and has already completed her academic career.

There are no other women holding positions within the senior staff of the Chair, so if we take into account the 3 senior teaching ranks, out of a total of 7 positions, only 1 is occupied by a woman, 14.2 %.

In the last 10 years, the position of Assistant Professor has only been occupied by 2 women. It has never exceeded 50% of the positions.

In regard to the Assistant positions, 4/12 positions are occupied by women with titular positions and 2 with temporary positions, representing 50% of the positions.

Of the teaching posts at grade 1 or Dissector level, 11 out of 24 are women, representing 45.83%.

Of the total number of women in the Chair, 18 (41.8%) out of 43 positions are occupied by women and only 6 of them have completed their Doctor of Medicine, being Assistant or Associate Professors.

Most of the first-degree teachers are students in the different years and courses, some of them in the final years, and a smaller number have obtained the title of Doctor of Medicine during their teaching career.

In 2017 the Uruguayan Association of Anatomy was founded, being headed by a woman since its founding and for two successive periods (the only one currently Associate Professor).

In the last elections (2022) of the 5 titular positions of the Board of Directors, only one (20%) was occupied by women.

Of the total number of positions in the Association, 19 are distributed as follows: Executive Committee (5), Preferential Substitute System (5), Fiscal Committee (6) and Electoral Committee (3), 9 are held by women, representing 42.1%.

From the analysis of the data provided, we conclude that women are increasingly gaining access to teaching positions through competitive examinations and that once in the Chair, participation in teaching, research and diffusion activities in Congresses or Conferences is more equal.

However, access to higher teaching positions and participation in organizational or important positions in scientific societies continues to be more limited and limited, which means that the processes that create the glass ceiling in teaching careers do not disappear with time or with the feminization of the teaching staff.

Changing the reality at the institutional level and in everyday academic activity, with teachers challenging colleagues and themselves and breaking down gender stereotypes, is an

immediate duty and a responsibility of all members of the academy.

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