

ending ghettoization? mainstreaming gender in spanish political science education

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Abstract

Mainstreaming gender in political science education requires legislation, structures, instruments, and critical actors, not to mention a favourable political context for putting the issue on the agenda. This article examines these issues in the Spanish context with particular reference to the opportunities afforded to the mainstreaming of gender in higher education as a result of the European Higher Education Area and the policies pursued by the Socialist Zapatero government (2004–2011). Upon the back of these initiatives, undergraduate gender and politics studies were introduced for the first time in Spanish universities, having from the most part until then been the reserve of interdisciplinary Masters programmes on gender. While the opportunities to embed gender within political science education have been opened up, this process of mainstreaming has also been characterised by resistance. These issues are unpacked through a case study of the development of the gender and politics network within the Spanish Association of Political and Administrative Science, as well as through reference to the project of a pioneering textbook on mainstreaming gender in political science.

Keywords gender mainstreaming; political science education; Spain; gender and politics

The objective of mainstreaming gender in political science education presents a number of key challenges to universities and professional associations, which have often been structured on gendered grounds. For such an objective to be achieved there is a need not only for legislation to be enacted, but also for institutional structures, policy instruments and 'critical actors' to be engaged in the process, as well as a favourable political context for putting the issue on the agenda in the first place. While the mainstreaming process is fraught with challenges, feminist actors have seized the opportunities that the context offered them and have achieved considerable progress in gendering political science education (see Tolleson-Rinehart and Carroll, 2006; Dahlerup, 2010).

This article addresses developments in the mainstreaming of gender into political science education through the case study of Spain. It starts from the window of opportunity for mainstreaming gender in education that has been opened up by the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and the activity of gender equality institutions during the Socialist Zapatero government (2004–2011). Following this opportunity, undergraduate gender and politics studies were introduced for the first time in Spanish universities, having until that time being primarily limited to interdisciplinary Masters level programmes on gender. The case study of Spain will be further analysed through a reflective account of the development of the gender and politics group within the Spanish Association of Political Science (AECPA), taking into consideration its challenges and achievements, as well through reference to a project that led to a pioneer textbook on mainstreaming gender in political science (Lois and Alonso, 2014). In providing this account, the analysis which follows is based upon the following sources of information: participant observation in the gender and

politics group from 2005 onwards; the gender and politics textbook project; experience of working with the board of the Spanish Political Science Association; the revision of existing equality legislation; and the responses from a questionnaire sent to members of the gender and politics group of the AECPA.

In terms of structure, the article proceeds as follows. First, it sets out the Spanish legislative and institutional context for mainstreaming gender in political science education. Second, it charts the feminist strategies that have been undertaken to end gender ghettoisation in Spanish political science studies. Finally, the concluding section outlines the implications of current resistances and backlashes to mainstreaming gender as well as noting the future work that needs to be undertaken in this area.

POLITICAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR MAINSTREAMING GENDER IN EDUCATION IN SPAIN

The teaching of gender and politics in Spain is a recent development. At the turn of the twenty-first century gender teaching was often located within interdisciplinary Masters programmes on gender studies as well as being taught as an isolated subject within Masters programmes in political science. However, from 2006 onwards there was a greater opportunity for debating the inclusion of gender and politics in undergraduate studies as a direct result of the policies pursued by the first socialist legislature of the Zapatero government (2004–2008) and the reorganisation of curricula opened up by the EHEA. While not deliberate, this twin-track process resulted on the one hand in the creation of equality machinery that sought to mainstream gender into the political science environment, and on the other hand in the reorganisation of curricula as promoted by

the EHEA, which opened up a space for introducing gender into university curricula. The contribution of 'critical actors' and feminist alliances has been crucial to both aspects of the process.

The two Zapatero governments that held office from 2004–2008 and 2008–2011 have proved to be critical with regard to the institutionalisation of gender equality in Spain, whereby equality machinery was consolidated with the creation within the Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs of a General Secretary for Equality Policies in 2004, and the establishment of a higher rank Ministry of Equality in 2008 (Lombardo and Bustelo, 2012). The General Secretary for Equality Policies was the key institutional actor involved in the adoption of the Equality Law 3/2007 that established a legislative mandate for public administrations to mainstream gender in the adoption, implementation, and budgeting of all policies (Valiente, 2013; Alonso, 2015).

The integration of a gender approach into education policy was established in the Equality Law 3/2007, which prescribed the incorporation of gender equality in curricula and teachers' trainings, the refusal of sexist contents and behaviours, and the promotion of a balanced presence of women and men. The latter meant that there had to be a gender quota of 40–60 in the decision-making bodies of educational institutions (Article 24). Moreover, a specific article (Article 25) was dedicated to gender equality in higher education, whereby public administrations were to be held responsible for integrating gender equality subjects in the curricula, creating specific postgraduate studies on gender, and promoting research on gender issues. The 2007 Equality Law also supported the setting up of institutions in charge of mainstreaming gender in science. Gender mainstreaming was the task of the Women and Science Unit (set up in 2005 and currently located within the Ministry of Economy and Competition), which supported the promotion of

research and teaching with a gender perspective in two specific laws on universities (Law 4/2007) and science (Law 14/2011).

The introduction of a gender perspective into Law 4/2007 on universities has promoted the inclusion of gender equality as a transversal goal in the university system. As a result, equality offices were set up in universities, a 40–60 gender quota in selection committees was established, and gender studies were included in the curriculum. The Women and Science Unit also played a key role in the revision of Law 14/2011 on Science, Technology and Innovation. This law prescribed that a gender perspective had to be mainstreamed into all policies, while at the same time specific gender equality measures were to be established. The latter included parity in selection and evaluation committees, sex-disaggregated statistics, and equality plans for research institutions. Recent Spanish Research and Development programmes¹ have included similar equality measures, being applied to human resources and research funding (for instance through guidelines on work-life balance and parity within research teams), showing that policymaking on research does, at least formally, take gender into account (Alonso, 2015).

The directors of the Women and Science Units, Capitolina Díaz and Inés Sánchez de Madariaga, have been critical actors for the mainstreaming of gender, not only in these two laws, but also in the revision of higher education curricula that took place in Spain as part of the construction of a EHEA. They strategically made alliances with feminist actors at the European level, such as the Helsinki Group on Women and Science (a watchdog for the European Commission's activity on gender equality in research), and with feminist policymakers and academics at the national level.

In relation to the latter, in 2006 the Women's Institute together with the Women and Science Unit organised the first Conference on Women, Gender and Feminist Studies. The aim of this conference was

to involve feminist academics from different disciplines in the discussion of undergraduate and postgraduate gender studies to be included in the EHEA curricula. Participants were asked to share and discuss syllabus of gender subjects they had already taught or wished to teach. This allowed the collection of a corpus of gender studies' programmes, and the creation of a space for sharing and debating experiences on teaching gender.

Equality units within universities have also had an important role in the mainstreaming of gender in the higher education system. Being currently present in all Spanish universities, these structures are in charge of developing gender equality policies that address students and university personnel alike. Activities include the drawing of diagnoses of the situation of men and women in faculties and the approval of equality plans. Barcelona Autonomous University has been a pioneer in the setting up of equality units, having established an Equality Observatory that has led to the launching of three equality plans, the undertaking of several studies, and the production of guidelines for non-sexist use of language as well as the provision of resources that facilitate the inclusion of a gender perspective into teaching. Equality units in Spanish universities have built a state-wide collaborative network to mainstream gender in higher education.

A direct result of the process of mainstreaming gender in education that took place in the first decade of the twenty-first century was the promotion – and sometimes the novel introduction – of gender and politics subjects in political science faculties in undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Despite these efforts to provide gender teaching at all levels of university study, there has been a concentration of teaching gender and politics in Master programmes in gender studies, which were already in place before this process started. Gender Masters were established thanks to

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the efforts of feminist academics that joined forces to create feminist university institutes to promote gender studies in the different disciplines. Master programmes in gender studies that include gender and politics subjects exist in many Spanish universities (http://www.uab.cat/web/postgrado/diplomatura-de-postgrado-en-genero-e-igualdad/datos-basicos-1206597472083.html?param1=1777_es/param2=2009/; <http://www.ucm.es/doctorado/doctordogenero/presentacion>). Similarly, there are examples of Ph.D.s on Gender and Women's Studies that include gender and politics as one of their main research topics (http://www.uam.es/cs/ContentServer/es/1242667431439/contenidoFinal/Doctorado_Interuniversitario.htm; <http://www.ucm.es/doctorado/doctordogenero/presentacion>). The provision of gender and politics studies at the undergraduate level continues to be less common in Spanish universities with there only being isolated examples of specific gender subjects in seven out of the twenty universities that offer political science degrees. Moreover, until recently there was just one undergraduate degree in gender equality that included gender

and politics courses at Rey Juan Carlos University.

Thus, in reflecting on these developments it is apparent that while the introduction of gender and politics subjects in the curriculum has not always followed a systematic process that has led to compulsory courses, the actions that have been influenced by the work of the national government and the European-level policymaking environment have nevertheless proved to be an important step in overcoming the ghettoisation of gender in political science teaching. This process of gender mainstreaming has been made possible by the work of critical feminist actors in Spanish academia.

STRATEGIC ACTION TO END THE GHETTOIZATION OF GENDER IN POLITICAL SCIENCE

Seizing the momentum of political support for gender equality during the 2004–2011 socialist governments, Spanish feminist political scientists developed gendering strategies to end the ghettoization of gender in political science by acting at three different levels. These were namely decision making, research and teaching. The section that follows addresses each of these interventions in turn.

One of the main problems of gender inequalities in political science decision making concerns women's representation. The presence of women in political science in Spain reproduces common trends identified in the women and science literature (European Commission, 2012) that has been reflected in the 'scissors diagram'. This shows how academic career development progressively marginalises women by keeping them out of high-rank positions (Figure 1). Thus, even though undergraduate and doctoral students have reached parity – with female percentages ranging from 40 to 50 per cent – it remains the

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case that teaching staff and full professors show a much greater gender imbalance, with women representing 32.5 and 7.3 per cent respectively. Political science departments are rarely feminised, that is with female members reaching at least 50 per cent. The only examples of this in Spain are the universities of Salamanca, Oberta de Catalunya, and Rey Juan Carlos (Elizondo, 2015). In nine departments women are at least 30 per cent of the personnel. Finally, one third of them are masculinised, with women's representation way below the average.

Within the AECPA, women currently represent 38.3 per cent of its members. Feminist action to gender decision making targeted AECPA more intensively between the end of the first and start of the second decade of the twenty-first century. A notable example of this was that during general conferences of the political science association, a group of feminist academics from different Spanish universities joined to share both a research and political agenda. At the occasion of the election of the new board of the Association in the 2009 Malaga conference, this group acted as a 'gender lobby' – as the former President of the AECPA would call it – influencing the results of the elections. Following an internal agreement to vote for women on the list that the candidate board of directors (made of three men and two women) had proposed, the gender lobby managed to elect 60 per cent women among the non-director members of the board. Of particular note was the fact that this included one gender expert. In the 2013 elections, although the directors' board was more

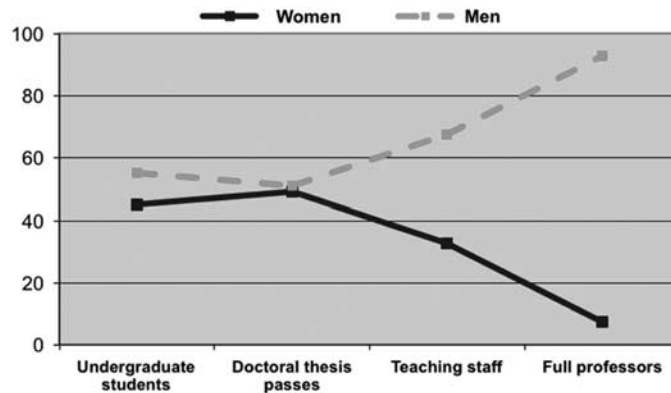


Figure 1 Scissors diagram of academic career in political science by sex in Spain (2012).

Source: Elizondo, 2015.

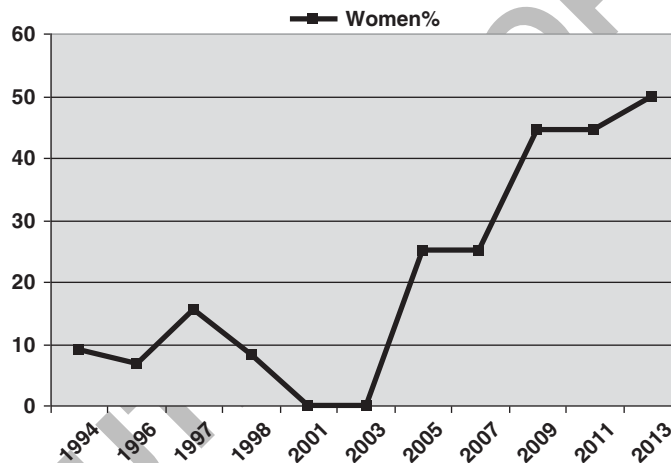


Figure 2 AECPA conference scientific committees by sex (1994–2013).

Source: Elizondo, 2015 and AECPA Website.

male dominated (with four men and one woman), the non-director members were still predominantly women, and two gender experts managed to enter the AECPA board. One impact of this feminisation of the AECPA board was that there were a number of changes in the practices of the Association. This included greater attention for a non-sexist use of language in the Association's communication and greater parity in committees, invited experts, and doctoral students (e.g., doctoral seminars

and selection committees). As a result of this conference scientific committees have shown a remarkable improvement over time and have reached parity in the last three AECPA conferences (Figure 2).

Gendering research in political science has been a key objective of the gender and politics group within the AECPA. At each general conference gender and politics sections and panels have been proposed in all areas. The strategy has been that of a dual approach aimed at

organising specific gender sections as well as mainstreaming gender in the other panels. Gender and politics proposals grew from one conference to another. The first gender-specific sections were launched in 1997 and only 1 year later there were already three panels at the 1998 conference. By 2014 and 2015 the conferences had managed to include an average of two gender sections, which brought together around twenty papers, thereby demonstrating that gender and politics had become one of the most participated and vibrant research areas of AECPA. This growth was also reflected in the creation of an informal standing group on gender and politics, which followed a similar approach to that of the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) permanent group on gender and politics. One impact of this was the creation of an internal mailing list that facilitated the sharing of information with regard to forthcoming conferences, publications, as well as research opportunities. The gender and politics group elected two coordinators and a steering group of five members to support the coordinating team. At the 2013 conference, the group strengthened its organisation, enlarged its membership, and delivered to the AECPA a proposal for organising permanent standing groups in the association that would be supported by web visibility. The activism of group members and gender experts in the board of the Association was critical to the creation of six permanent groups in 2015, which followed the model proposed by the gender and politics one, with web visibility and institutional mailing lists (<http://www.aecpa.es/grupos-permanentes/>). By that stage the gender group had already reached over 50 members. The significance of these developments is that the formal institutionalisation of a group that had been informally working for years will not only give greater visibility and legitimacy to gender studies within the discipline, but will also

act as a forum for debating and channeling proposals for mainstreaming gender in the Association.

In addition to these developments, the gender and politics group also made efforts to debate with other (non-feminist) colleagues the marginalisation of gender in the discipline and the need to mainstream gender in political science. For this purpose, at the 2011 AECPA conference the group organised the first roundtable to discuss 'Political science with a gender perspective: teaching and research', inviting one of the coordinators of a project to mainstream gender into political science, the director of the Women and Science Unit from the Ministry of Science and Innovation, and two well-known male Spanish political science professors. The roundtable was a success in terms of attracting young scholars, which in turn demonstrated the considerable interest in gender and politics among the new generation of Spanish political scientists.

Teaching activities have also been of major concern for the gender and politics group. Despite the presence of a legal gender mainstreaming mandate, the group noted that most teaching materials and syllabus were still gender blind and feminist scholars' main findings were openly disregarded. In response to this, a few participants of the gender and politics group launched a project to develop innovative teaching material on how to mainstream gender in political science studies. Funded by the Galician Equality Service, and coordinated by members of the gender and politics group from the University of Santiago de Compostela, the project organised two meetings in 2010 to discuss approaches to accomplish this mainstreaming goal. The group agreed that the contribution should not consist of a gender-specific textbook. Rather, the idea was to fight gender ghettoization by providing a political science textbook that would integrate a gender perspective in the field, while at the same time showing

how feminist scholars have challenged the main debates and findings of the discipline. Gathering together fourteen researchers from several Spanish universities, the team drafted chapters on ten of the main subjects of political science undergraduate studies (that is methodology, political theory, institutions, political behaviour, collective action, public policies, policy evaluation, Spanish political system, international relations, and political communication). Although the book drew on a variety of approaches on how to mainstream gender, all of the chapters adopted a common approach of integrating a gender perspective. As such, the chapters provided an introduction to the field through identifying the main concepts, research questions and findings; they included feminist concepts, questions and findings; they offered examples and/or pictures related to gender/women's issues; they used a non-sexist language; and they included the main gender and politics works in the reference list and put the first names of the authors to give visibility to female scholars.

As part of this work draft chapters were shared with teachers and students in a public debate at the University of Santiago de Compostela. A video was also prepared for the occasion in which undergraduate students from three universities were asked to reflect on the extent to which gender issues were addressed in class, their experiences with sexism in the classroom, and their knowledge of female political science authors. The video, and the discussion that followed, helped to show the lack –and need – of a gender perspective into political science education.

The final result of this mainstreaming project was the publication in 2014 of the textbook *Political Science with a Gender Perspective* (Lois and Alonso, 2014). Having been warmly welcomed by feminist academics, the book won the Ángeles Durán Award on Innovation in Gender and Women's Studies, which is the most relevant recognition in Spain in the area of

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gender studies. The textbook has proved to be a considerable success and has been adopted by several universities for teaching at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels (Universidad de Santiago de Compostela, Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Universidad Miguel Hernández, Universidad de Barcelona, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, Universidad de Girona, Universidad del País Vasco, Universidad de Jaén). The experience of employing it in both gender and non-gender specific courses at Madrid Complutense University has proved useful to raise awareness and share knowledge about gender equality issues in politics and in political science studies, which students claimed they had not discussed in other courses. While at the time of writing it is not yet possible to provide a full reflection of the book's impact on the discipline, given that it was published in 2014, the initial reaction from students and the profession has indeed been positive.

WORK AHEAD AND RESISTANCES

Despite the success of the textbook project, much remains to be done to mainstream gender into political science decision making, research and teaching in Spain. Within the AECPA there are at least two objectives which remain to be tackled. First, gender equality practices such as parity, non-sexist language, and promoting gender and politics research need to be consolidated and fixed through a reform of the organisation's statutes. Second, now

that the gender and politics group has been officially recognised as a permanent standing group in the Association, together with the rest of working groups, it is to be seen how it will use this formal channel to make its voice and demands heard in the AECPA board, and how the Association will respond to its gender mainstreaming proposals.

In reflecting on these objectives it is apparent that resistances exist with regard to the teaching of and researching on gender in Spanish political science. Moreover, these challenges have intensified in the wake of the present economic crisis. The onset of the economic crisis in 2008 coincided with the very period when the gendering of political science in Spain had begun to gather momentum, and the resulting resistance to this process that has emerged has hindered the consolidation of Masters and undergraduate studies. While budget cuts in research funds and in gender equality policies are likely to affect the promotion of gender research, the negative impact of 'austerity' policies adopted in Spain from 2009 onwards is already visible in gender and politics studies. For instance, the crisis has been used as an excuse to eliminate newly established gender degrees, as evidenced by the suppression in 2014 of the undergraduate degree in gender equality at Rey Juan Carlos University (despite the positive evaluations received and high students' enrolment). According to the coordinator of the degree, although the justification put forward by the university council was the need to cut costs, the fact of the matter is that there remain fundamental ideological resistances against gender equality that have motivated the suppression of the degree.² In other cases, the problem is that gender and politics courses tend to be optional rather than compulsory, which means that they are highly dependent on the number of enrolled students. At a time of austerity measures, optional courses are currently threatened

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by the reduction of personnel in Spanish public universities so that in some cases if there is less than fifteen students enrolled on a course then it is suppressed.

For Masters degrees in gender, finding sufficient students and public funding to keep the programmes functioning is often a problem and this is a challenge, which has been heightened in the context of the economic crisis. Indeed, the state and regional gender equality machineries, a key source of funding for this kind of studies, have suffered huge budget cuts and have undertaken significant restructuring that has jeopardised their effectiveness and the future of gender equality policies itself (Paleo and Alonso, 2014; Lombardo and León, 2014). Similarly, research and development policy retrenchment has limited the opportunity for further gender and politics research, thereby increasing difficulties in obtaining funding for both research projects and pre-doctoral and post-doctoral grants.

In general, it is yet to be seen if the existence of a legal mandate, the (partial) institutionalisation of gender equality in higher education, and a small but nonetheless committed group of gender and

politics scholars will be able to secure continued progress in the mainstreaming of gender in political science in the Spanish political and economic context that is now more adverse to gender equality than it was in the first decade of the twenty-first century.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the mainstreaming of gender into political science education in Spain has shown that a number of factors promoted the integration of gender in political science education. These included the existence of a legal mandate for mainstreaming gender in higher education and the creation of gender equality institutions within universities (gender units, feminist research institutes, etc.). A political context favourable to gender equality was key to put the issue on the agenda and a group of committed actors within political institutions, political science associations and universities has been fundamental to set the agenda and lobby for change.

Yet, despite the advances achieved in ending the ghettoization of gender studies in Spain, progress in gendering political science needs to be consolidated and legislation properly implemented. In relation to teaching, while the experience of creating master degrees in gender studies that include political science subjects shows certain consolidation, undergraduate degrees need further development (and further study too). The publication in 2014 of a political science textbook from a gender perspective is not only a sign of consolidation but also a helpful tool to promote the integration of gender in political science teaching. With respect to decision making, parity and the promotion of gender studies in political science still need to be properly implemented, through the reform of university and association statutes, actors responsible to monitor implementation, and systematic gender training programmes

of higher education personnel. Research in gender studies is currently suffering serious backlash because of the cuts to research, education, and gender equality policies enacted by the policies adopted by the Spanish government in response to the economic crisis.

In the current economic and political context, resistances to the mainstreaming of gender in political science studies show that, despite the undeniable progress made in Spain, the lack of prioritisation of gender in the discipline will require constant work by feminist academics to maintain equality achievements, consolidate informal gender equality practices, and counteract gender backlash because of austerity policies. Strengthening, expanding, and maintaining active feminist academic networks and critical actors in the discipline, as well as developing teaching tools to mainstream gender in political science, have proved useful experiences for gaining greater visibility of gender studies in the Spanish context. Support from political science institutions such as the ECPR and the International Political Science Association, guidelines to –and exchanges with – national political science institutions are needed to promote the further integration of gender in political science and to keep gender equality on the agenda in difficult times.

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Notes

- 1 See for instance the FPI-FPU and *Juan de la Cierva* programs funding respectively Ph.D. and post-doctoral grants.
- 2 Público 3 March 2014 acceded 19 July 2014 <http://www.publico.es/actualidad/505508/a-la-universidad-rey-juan-carlos-le-molestaba-el-grado-de-igualdad>

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