


Institutions, State development and Education in Spain during the 19th and early 20th Centuries

Instituciones, Estado y educación en España en el siglo XIX y principios del XX

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ANALYTICAL SUMMARY

This article seeks to investigate how institutions may have influenced the evolution of education in Spain during the second half of the 19th century and the early 20th century. To this end, it analyses the administrative and legal distinctions between the *foral* provinces of Navarre, Alava, Biscay, and Gipuzkoa, and the rest of the Spanish territory. During the period under study, these provinces enjoyed political autonomy (revoked in 1876) as well as economic and fiscal autonomy (revoked in 1936), which led to the establishment of institutions and the application of national laws that differed from those in other provinces.

To examine how these institutional differences impacted the development of human capital, a Spatial Regression Discontinuity Design (SRDD) is employed. This methodology allows for the comparison of similar adjacent observations, in this case, municipalities along the border between the *foral* provinces and the rest of Spain, which differ only in one aspect: the institutions.

The analysis reveals that those provinces which initially placed greater emphasis on women's education (Navarre and Alava) exhibited higher female literacy rates. This was due to a greater presence of coeducational or *mixta* schools in these provinces, which facilitated better access for women to basic education. However, starting in 1902, with the centralization of educational spending, which had previously been managed by the municipalities, and its delayed implementation in the *foral* provinces until 1912 due to institutional conflict between the *foral* governments and the State, the initially higher female literacy rates began to decline significantly in Navarre and disappeared entirely in Alava. This decline can be explained by the fact that education became a battleground in the ongoing political conflict between these provinces and the State, as they sought to maintain the political and economic privileges afforded to them by the Foral system.

Although the initial advantage in Navarre and Alava, or the decline in the early 20th century, is linked here to the institutions and conflicts between them, a more detailed analysis of these institutions—who comprised them, why these decisions were made in Navarre and Alava but not elsewhere—is necessary for a deeper understanding. Therefore, while this article builds on the literature that has recently analysed the evolution of education and points to a possible explanation for regional differences, a more thorough analysis of the ultimate determinants is required.

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