

Abstract

This paper will examine the position of women academics at British universities. The analysis will not only provide a statistical portrait from a gendered perspective but will also identify some national trends. Because quantitative description draws attention to particular phenomena but does not show their causes, some possible exploratory hypotheses will be discussed in order to present some possible explanations. The analysis will show how from the early 1960s onwards, the percentage of women holding academic positions in the UK has improved only marginally. The persistence of a pattern of attrition and subject ghettoization, a slow increase of women’s numbers in élite universities and a process of casualisation in which academic women are embedded, characterise their current position, making women the “proletariats” of British academia. Finally, some recommendations will be presented for future attempts to improve not only women’s position but also their working conditions.