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Abstract

The information on academic performance rates—what percentage of the enrolled credits a student can pass in one academic year—showed traditionally a relatively low students' academic performance at Spanish public universities. However, over the period 2008–2014, the academic productivity of undergraduate students at public higher education institutions improved considerably. In this period, Spanish universities experienced changes related to the structuring of the educational curriculum—the homogenization of undergraduate university degrees—and the policy of tuition fees. In relation to the latter, the entry into force of the Royal Decree-Law 14/2012 (the so-called Decreto Wert) allowed universities a considerable increase in tuition fees. Using data for Spanish public universities for the academic years 2008/2009 and 2013/2014, this paper studied to what extent this educational law contributed to the improvement of the academic performance of undergraduate students. Using a stochastic frontier analysis for panel data, this paper showed that the increase in undergraduate tuition fees (first enrolment) acted as a catalyst in reducing the inefficiencies of the Spanish public university

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