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University Education Policies and Student Inclusion in Peru after Law 30220

Políticas educativas universitarias e inclusión estudiantil en el Perú tras la Ley 30220

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ABSTRACT

The 2014 Peruvian university reform raised institutional quality requirements, since Law 30220 created the National Superintendence of University Higher Education and set basic conditions for universities to operate, although student inclusion was left distributed among scholarships, quotas and sectoral rules. The study therefore set out to analyze the relationship between Peruvian university education policies and the inclusion of students living in poverty, Indigenous students and students with disabilities. A qualitative, documentary approach was applied to twenty-four sources, comprising four laws and twenty peer-reviewed articles. The results show that Peruvian policies mainly protect admission, while retention depends on targeted programs and graduation lacks instruments of its own. The study concludes that regulated quality and inclusion have advanced along separate tracks that should be brought together.

Descriptors: higher education; social inclusion; equal opportunity; inclusive education; educational opportunities. (Source: UNESCO Thesaurus).

RESUMEN

La reforma universitaria peruana de 2014 elevó las exigencias de calidad institucional, por cuanto la Ley 30220 creó la Superintendencia Nacional de Educación Superior Universitaria y fijó condiciones básicas para funcionar, aunque la inclusión estudiantil quedó repartida entre becas, cuotas y normas sectoriales. Es así que el estudio se planteó como objetivo analizar la relación entre las políticas educativas universitarias del Perú y la inclusión de estudiantes en situación de pobreza, indígenas y con discapacidad. En este sentido se empleó un enfoque cualitativo y documental sobre veinticuatro fuentes, cuatro leyes y veinte artículos arbitrados. Entre los resultados se obtuvo que las políticas peruanas protegen sobre todo el ingreso, mientras la permanencia depende de programas focalizados y el egreso carece de instrumentos propios. Entre las conclusiones se estableció que la calidad regulada y la inclusión avanzaron por carriles separados que conviene articular.

Descriptores: enseñanza superior; inclusión social; igualdad de oportunidades; educación inclusiva; oportunidades educacionales. (Fuente: Tesauro UNESCO).

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Research Articles Section

INTRODUCTION

What does it mean for a university to be of quality if part of the country's young people never reach its classrooms or leave them in the first semesters? In Peru the question acquired legal weight on July 9, 2014, when the Congreso de la República (2014) enacted Law 30220, which created the National Superintendence of University Higher Education (SUNEDU) and made the operation of each university conditional on compliance with basic quality conditions, including the existence of complementary health, social assistance and psycho-pedagogical support services. The law reacted against a system that had grown without control, and Rodríguez González (2020) recalls that in the 1990s the pressure for access was met with deregulation and expansion of the private sector, which left broad but unequal enrollment and paved the way, from the end of that decade, for compensatory scholarship and loan policies for young people who were poor or marginalized because of their social or ethnic origin.

The effects of the reform on supply can be counted, because Gómez Méndez (2020) recorded 45 universities to which SUNEDU denied an institutional license (outdated curricula, obsolete laboratories, inadequate premises, less than 25% full-time faculty), and Limaymanta et al. (2024), by cross-referencing Scopus, SciVal and CONCYTEC records for 92 licensed universities, saw publications grow, especially at for-profit private universities, although international co-authorship and presence in first-quartile journals declined. Cristobal Gallo (2025) takes the count up to the 2024 rankings, with 30 Peruvian institutions in the SIR, 25 in the QS Latin America ranking and 10 in the THE, something unthinkable before 2014.

In July 2022 the Congreso de la República (2022) passed Law 31520, changed the composition of SUNEDU's board of directors and gave universities back the autonomy they had been demanding. Cristobal Gallo (2025) does not hide his disagreement and asks why politicians restored a regime that, after more than thirty years, had not placed a single Peruvian university in the rankings. The 2015-2022 administrative data processed by Etesse and Beretta (2025) add a disturbing element, the increase in acting rectors, vice-rectors and deans, many without an end date, which could mean, according to those authors, less transparency.

Student inclusion, meanwhile, was left in the hands of other rules and other offices, since with Law 29837 the Congreso de la República (2012a) created PRONABEC (on which Beca 18 and Beca Permanencia now depend) and with Article 38 of Law 29973 the Congreso de la República (2012b) required universities to reserve 5% of admission places for persons with disabilities. How much has been achieved? Little, according to González Garrido (2024), who recalls that, according to official information, “only 11% of persons with disabilities over the age of 15” pursue higher education.

The reviewed literature studies each piece separately, whether licensing, a specific scholarship or a group of students, and rarely asks whether the architecture as a whole accompanies a student from admission to graduation. Based on the above, the research aims to analyze the relationship between Peru's university education policies and the inclusion of students living in poverty, Indigenous students and students with disabilities in the phases of access, retention and graduation.

METHOD

The research followed a qualitative, documentary approach, with a public policy analysis design. The corpus consisted of twenty-four sources, four Peruvian laws published in the official gazette El Peruano between 2012 and 2022 and twenty peer-reviewed articles published between 2020 and 2025, located in Crossref with combinations of terms such as Law 30220, SUNEDU, licensing, Beca 18, PRONABEC, university dropout, Indigenous students and students with disabilities. Only texts with a verifiable DOI or, in the case of laws, with an official publication number and date were accepted, and gray literature was discarded.

Sixteen of the articles deal with the Peruvian case and four were included as regional contrast, two on Argentina and Colombia regarding Indigenous students, one on the Chilean PACE access program and a metasynthesis on university students with disabilities. Table 1 summarizes the composition of the corpus.

Table 1. Composition of the documentary corpus.

Category	Sources	No.
Peruvian laws	Law 29837 (2012), Law 29973 (2012), Law 30220 (2014), Law 31520 (2022)	4

Category	Sources	No.
Regulation and university quality	Cristobal Gallo (2025); Etesse and Beretta (2025); Gómez Méndez (2020); Limaymanta et al. (2024); Negreiros Mermas et al. (2025); Yapuchura Saico (2021)	6
Scholarships and student financing	Anselmo Vargas (2021); Guzmán Centeno (2024); Quispe Mamani et al. (2024); Rodríguez González (2020)	4
Retention and dropout	Castro Aguirre (2020); Chui B. et al. (2025); Escalante López et al. (2023)	3
Indigenous students	Merino Solari (2022); Olivera et al. (2021); Samecash Yampis et al. (2025)	3
Regional contrast and disability	Espinosa Valenzuela and Rodríguez Garcés (2024); González Garrido (2024); Martínez Silva (2023); Rodríguez (2021)	4
Total		24

Note. Developed in-house.

The analysis was organized in three phases. In the first, the target population and the point in the trajectory addressed were identified for each law and program. In the second, empirical data on effects and barriers were extracted from the articles, with attention to figures, places and samples. In the third, both sources were contrasted through a coverage matrix that crosses the instruments with the phases of access, retention and graduation, whose rating as explicit, partial or no evidence corresponds to the author's interpretation.

RESULTS

Quality regulation and its effects on students

Law 30220 was not presented as an inclusion law, although several of its requirements fully affect the student experience. By requiring welfare services, licensing turned social and psycho-pedagogical support into a requirement for operating. Yapuchura Saico (2021) reviewed the licensing technical sheets of ten public universities in the Southern Macro Region and found that all of them met the verification of basic conditions, but only 20% reached the criteria of scientific production and impact, so that eight availed themselves of Article 13 of the law and obtained six-year licenses.

Was meeting the checklist enough to change the university from within? Negreiros Mermas et al. (2025), with interviews with students, teachers and quality officers, describe a dichotomy between a formal effect, sustainable in administration, and a “non-significant and discontinuous effect on academic and cultural practices”. The

finding matters for inclusion, since welfare services may exist on the organizational chart without reaching the students who need them most. The data on university governance by Etesse and Beretta (2025) point in the same direction, because management in the hands of interim authorities has fewer incentives to sustain long-term support programs.

Table 2 arranges the policy instruments identified according to their legal basis, target population and documented limitation.

Table 2. University policy instruments with an impact on student inclusion.

Instrument	Legal basis	Target population	Documented limitation
Institutional licensing	Law 30220, Arts. 13 and 28	Entire university system	Formal effect on management and weak effect on academic practice
Beca 18	Law 29837 (PRONABEC)	High-achieving secondary school graduates living in poverty	Tutoring without an intercultural strategy for migrant scholarship holders
Beca Permanencia	Law 29837 (PRONABEC)	Vulnerable university students already enrolled	Limited coverage and evidence restricted to regional cases
Reserved places	Law 29973, Art. 38	Persons with disabilities	Regulates only admission and not accommodations during studies
Welfare services	Law 30220, Art. 28	Students in general	No retention targets or indicators by group

Note. The identification of the limitation corresponds to the author's reading of the sources in the corpus. Developed in-house.

Scholarships: from admission to retention

Beca 18, the country's most visible inclusion policy, was studied by Guzmán Centeno (2024) with 57 scholarship holders from Metropolitan Lima in 2023, who found a direct impact of the Support and Guidance Platform on its implementation, with effects on vocational guidance, information about institutions and exam preparation, which shows that the program invests mainly in the transition to higher education. Anselmo Vargas (2021), on the other hand, focused on what happens afterward, among bilingual students of International Business Administration at the CERTUS institute, and concluded that the Beca 18 tutoring guidelines do not include a sociocultural strategy for scholarship holders who migrate to the capital.

Beca Permanencia tries to fill that gap, and Quispe Mamani et al. (2024) applied a questionnaire to 146 scholarship holders from 35 professional schools at the Universidad Nacional del Altiplano, in Puno, and found a moderate positive

correlation between the program and economic security, performance and the management of academic stress, which is why they describe it as a policy that contributes to the education of young people from vulnerable sectors. The evidence, however, comes from a single university and does not show how many at-risk students remain outside its coverage.

Castro Aguirre (2020), from the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion, devoted a specific study to university retention, treated as a matter distinct from access, and the literature on dropout bears him out. In the survey by Escalante López et al. (2023), applied to 1,950 of 6,560 students, economic and family factors top the causes of dropout, followed by lack of motivation, uncertain vocation and lack of study techniques. In Puno, among 365 Veterinary Medicine and Animal Science students, Chui B. et al. (2025) found something less predictable (low self-esteem multiplied the risk of leaving the program by 4.114), a figure that, in the author's view, places part of the problem in psychological well-being, the very well-being that Law 30220 requires as a service and never measures as an outcome.

Indigenous students and cultural relevance

For Indigenous university students the pandemic was a double blow, as reconstructed by Olivera et al. (2021) with news reports, official provisions, webinars and conversations with officials that portray a State that continued to act “without considering the living conditions of the Indigenous population” on top of a long-standing exclusion. With no signal in their home communities and with families who lost income, many scholarship holders saw a barely begun trajectory cut short.

There is, however, evidence pointing the other way, since at an intercultural university in the northeast Samecash Yampis et al. (2025) measured in 100 Indigenous students a correlation of $\rho = .624$ between adaptation to university life and academic effectiveness (performance, self-efficacy, persistence), and Merino Solari (2022) speaks of a propitiatory tension in the ethnic identity itineraries of these young people. Read together with Anselmo Vargas (2021), both works suggest that retention depends on the cultural relevance of support, precisely what national scholarships did not anticipate.

That the problem is not only Peruvian is shown by Martínez Silva (2023), who divides the limitations of Indigenous inclusion in Colombia between access, retention and graduation, on the one hand, and graduates' giving back to their peoples, on the other, and by Rodríguez (2021), who from Argentina proposes looking at these policies through the decolonial option and distrusts a university universality built without ancestral knowledge.

Students with disabilities

In matters of disability almost everything rests on the 5% quota, but what happens after the exam? The metasynthesis by González Garrido (2024), based on eleven articles from Scopus and SciELO, lists what the quota leaves untouched (unadapted infrastructure, little use of Universal Design for Learning, internal regulations without reasonable accommodation) and assigns the attitude of staff the role of main facilitator or obstacle. A reserved place does not bring with it an accessible classroom. Table 3 summarizes the barriers by group.

Table 3. Documented barriers by student group and phase of the trajectory.

Group	Access	Retention	Main source
Students living in poverty	Cost of preparation and relocation	Economic and family problems as the main cause of dropout	Escalante López et al. (2023); Quispe Mamani et al. (2024)
Indigenous students	Migration to cities and digital divide	Tutoring without an intercultural approach; identity tension	Anselmo Vargas (2021); Olivera et al. (2021); Merino Solari (2022)
Students with disabilities	5% quota with low actual enrollment	Infrastructure, lack of reasonable accommodation and attitudes	González Garrido (2024)
Students at psychosocial risk	Not identified	Low self-esteem with a 4.1 times higher risk of dropout	Chui B. et al. (2025)

Note. Developed in-house based on the corpus.

Coverage matrix of the policies

Figure 1 crosses the five instruments with the three phases of the trajectory. Access concentrates explicit coverage, through Beca 18 and reserved places, and retention brings together partial coverage, except in the case of Beca Permanencia. Graduation, understood as obtaining a degree and entering the labor market, has no instrument documented in the corpus.



Figure 1. Coverage of policy instruments according to the phase of the student trajectory.
Note. Qualitative rating by the author based on Tables 2 and 3.

DISCUSSION

The results show two logics that coexist without intersecting, a regulatory one, which measures quality by the institution, its faculty, its laboratories and its scientific production, whose effects can be seen in the closure of universities and in the rankings described by Gómez Méndez (2020), Limaymanta et al. (2024) and Cristobal Gallo (2025), and a compensatory one, which measures inclusion by the number of scholarships awarded or places reserved. Neither asks about the student who entered thanks to a scholarship and drops out in the third semester, and that is why the basic quality conditions include welfare services without requiring retention outcomes by group.

The Chilean experience serves as a contrast, since Espinosa Valenzuela and Rodríguez Garcés (2024), in their systematic review of the PACE program, record a positive evaluation and a predominance of studies on the support stage, focused on what happens after admission. Peru has the opposite experience, with research and design focused on entry, and only the works by Quispe Mamani et al. (2024) and Castro Aguirre (2020) deal with continuity.

Can Law 31520 alter this picture? With the available corpus there is no way to assert it, although it is hard to imagine that a supervisor with fewer powers, in the scenario

described by Etesse and Beretta (2025) and criticized by Cristobal Gallo (2025), would start requiring inclusion indicators it never asked for. The author sees, instead, a possible route on two fronts: licensing, which could require separate retention rates for scholarship holders, Indigenous students and students with disabilities, and PRONABEC, which could extend to all its scholarship holders the intercultural tutoring whose absence was pointed out by Anselmo Vargas (2021) and the adaptation work that Samecash Yampis et al. (2025) linked to persistence.

Consider a student with a disability who enters a university licensed under Law 30220 through the quota of Law 29973; nothing along that path guarantees ramps, accessible materials or teachers trained in reasonable accommodation, and if González Garrido (2024) is right in giving attitudes a weight equivalent to that of infrastructure, the pending task also involves teacher training.

Among the limitations of the study are its documentary nature, without primary data on enrollment, dropout or graduation by group (SUNEDU and PRONABEC publish them in a scattered manner), and a coverage matrix whose rating is interpretive and requires contrast with impact evaluations. Moreover, almost all the evidence on retention comes from the Altiplano and Lima, so that the Amazon region and private universities in the regions are left out.

CONCLUSIONS

Among the conclusions, Law 30220 changed the Peruvian university system from the standpoint of institutional quality, with 45 universities denied a license and greater scientific production at the 92 licensed ones, although in the classroom the effect was uneven and, since 2022, Law 31520 curtailed the supervisor.

It was likewise established that inclusion followed its own path, supported by Beca 18, Beca Permanencia and the 5% reservation for persons with disabilities, three instruments focused on admission that leave unanswered cultural relevance for Indigenous students and reasonable accommodation during studies.

Finally, it is concluded that retention depends on short-range targeted scholarships and that no one deals with graduation. Bringing quality and inclusion together would, in the author's view, involve measuring retention and graduation by group within

licensing and offering intercultural and psychosocial support to all scholarship holders. These relationships remain to be tested with official statistics and with Amazonian universities.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares that he has no conflict of interest in relation to this research.

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