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Dropout rates in Italian universities: a comparison of online and traditional universities

In Italy, the establishment of online universities was officially sanctioned by the 2003 Finance Act. Despite this, academic research on the topic remains limited. Online universities are often perceived as having lower academic prestige and are commonly associated with students seeking degrees primarily for public sector employment. However, these institutions also provide significant advantages in terms of flexible scheduling and the elimination of relocation and housing costs. To contribute to this ongoing debate, we apply a propensity score matching approach to compare dropout rates between cohorts of students enrolled in traditional and online Italian universities between 2010 and 2019. Preliminary findings suggest that attending an online university has a positive effect, particularly for students who are typically at higher risk of dropping out from traditional institutions.

Keywords/Topics

higher education, online universities, propensity score, dropout rates

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