

Internationalization of Higher Education in Latin America: Zooming in the Proximities and Distances Between Brazil and Peru

Reninni Taquini

Federal University of Espírito Santo (UFES), Brazil

Av. Fernando Ferrari, 514 - Goiabeiras, Vitória - ES, 29075-910, Brazil

E-mail: rtaquini@gmail.com

Kyria Rebeca Finardi (Corresponding author)

Federal University of Espírito Santo (UFES), Brazil

Av. Fernando Ferrari, 514 - Goiabeiras, Vitória - ES, 29075-910, Brazil

E-mail: kyria.finardi@gmail.com

Roberta Gomes Leão

Federal University of Espírito Santo (UFES), Brazil

Av. Fernando Ferrari, 514 - Goiabeiras, Vitória - ES, 29075-910, Brazil

E-mail: robertagleao@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study offers a reflection on the process of internationalization of higher education (IHE) in Latin America, zooming in on the proximities and distances between Brazil and Peru. These countries are contextualized within regional and global frameworks to contrast their IHE processes. To this end, data was collected from the official websites of 118 public higher education institutions (HEIs) in those countries – 69 Brazilian federal universities and 49 Peruvian national universities. A quantitative analysis was conducted to identify explicit evidence of internationalization through website menus and search tools. Results show that

most of the Brazilian universities and 65.31% of Peruvian HEIs presented some evidence of internationalization, carried out through different strategies. Brazilian universities tended to highlight mobility programs, partnerships, multilingual resources, and international offices, while Peruvian universities emphasized participation in regional networks, virtual mobility, and government-supported guides. The study suggests that while Brazil leads this process in terms of international rankings and research output, Peru appears more intentional in communicating internationalization efforts online. This analysis underscores the need for inclusive, situated, and multidimensional approaches to internationalization in the Latin America.

Keywords: Internationalization of higher education, Latin America, Brazil. Peru

1. Introduction

Since their inception, universities have fulfilled three distinct missions that developed historically in this order: teaching, research, and later, outreach. To keep pace with the progress brought by globalization and integrate into the global landscape, the process of internationalization of higher education (henceforth IHE) has been implemented and is regarded by some as the fourth university mission (Santos & Almeida-Filho, 2012). Notwithstanding this view of internationalization as the fourth mission of universities, we tend to think of this process as part of the tripartite missions of teaching, research and outreach (Ortiz-Rojo & Finardi, 2023; Ortiz-Rojo & Lacruz, 2025).

This article seeks to reflect on the process of IHE in Latin America by zooming in and contrasting this process in Brazil and Peru, identifying proximities and distances in the process of internationalization of higher education in those two countries. One reason for the choice of these countries is related to how universities developed there, historically.

The first universities founded in Brazil were established in 1909 (Federal University of Amazonas) and 1912 (Federal University of Paraná) (Note 1), whereas the *Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos*, in Peru, holds the title of the oldest university in Latin America, founded in 1551 (Note 2). This indicates a gap of over three and a half centuries between their foundations. This gap can be partially explained by the colonial and colonizing strategy and take of Portugal (in Brazil) and Spain (in Peru) in the period.

Considering the gap observed in the historical evolution of higher education in those two countries, on the one hand, and the historical evolution of internationalization as the fourth mission of universities, on the other, this study aims to contrast the process of IHE in Brazil and Peru so as to check whether the gap in the foundation of universities in those two countries also reflects a discrepancy in their IHE processes.

According to data from the *Plataforma del Estado Peruano* (Note 3), one of the platform's objectives is to provide citizens with access to institutional information, revealing that there are 3,365 higher education institutions (HEIs) in the country, of which 1,193 are public and 2,172 are private. These Peruvian higher education institutions include universities and university-level institutes (212), teacher training institutes (217), technological higher education institutes (860), artistic higher education institutes (20), technological higher education institutes of the armed forces and police (5), and vocational training centers (2,051). Meanwhile, according to the National Institute for Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP) (Note 4), whose objective includes conducting the Educational related Census, Brazil has 2,457 higher education institutions, of which 304 are public and 2,153 are private. These Brazilian HEIs comprise universities (203), university centers (322), colleges (1,891), and Federal Institutes (IFs) and Federal Centers for Technological Education (*Cefets*) (40). As a focus of analysis, we will examine the websites of 118 public federal universities, including 49 Peruvian national universities (*universidades nacionales*) (Note 5) and 69 Brazilian public federal universities (Note 6).

It is important to note that when comparing the number of higher education institutions per

country and population, Peru has 3,365 HEIs for a population of 32 million inhabitants (Note 7), while Brazil has 2,457 HEIs for a population of 212 million inhabitants (Note 8). This equates to a ratio of 105.16 HEIs per million inhabitants in Peru, compared to 11.6 HEIs per million inhabitants in Brazil. Thus, it is evident that proportionally, Peru has significantly more HEIs than Brazil besides having more tradition in the foundation of higher education institutions. Despite having older and more universities per inhabitants than Brazil, Peruvian universities are not as well ranked internationally. When we compare Peruvian and Brazilian universities, we see that Brazil has 47 universities among the top 2000 (out of 20,966 institutions ranked), whereas Peru has only 2, according to The Center for World University Rankings (CWUR) (Note 9) in 2024. It worths mentioning that both Peruvian universities are private and ranked 1402^o and 1628^o, whereas Brazilian federal universities (which are public) were ranked 44 times (far more than private ones, mentioned only 3 times) and the best well-ranked is on the 117th position. But before we zoom in the process of IHE in those two countries, let us zoom out and peek into that process in the region.

2. Internationalization of Higher Education in Latin America

As put forward by Leal, Finardi and Abba (2022), one of the recent developments in the field of IHE is a greater recognition that, despite the opportunities offered by this process, there are several political and ethical issues that are complex, contradictory, and contestable requiring a situated analysis (Stein, 2017; Leal, 2020) making Latin America a rich field for the discussions afforded by this process. Chiappa and Finardi (2021), who analyzed this process in Chile and Brazil, claim that even though the process of IHE is usually portrayed as an intrinsically beneficial process, its “darker side” (e.g., Archanjo & Barbosa, 2019) – a reference to Walter Mignolo’s thought on coloniality – hides mechanisms that maintain and reinforce power asymmetries and hierarchies between knowledges and people (Vavrus & Pekol, 2015), accordingly with their positioning within the historical world-system (Wallerstein, 2006).

Decolonial perspectives claim that, instead of suppressing knowledges, the process of IHE should promote an ecology of knowledges and languages (e.g., Finardi, França, & Guimarães, 2022, 2023) in a movement from university to pluriversity.

Indeed, some of the criticism raised against current views and practices of IHE in Latin America (see for example Chiappa & Finardi, 2021; Finardi, 2021, 2022; Leal, Finardi, & Abba, 2022; Abba, Leal, & Finardi, 2022, Finardi, França, & Guimarães, 2022, 2023) refer to the understanding that internationalization, in copying models from the Global North (Note 10), involve more competition than cooperation (De Wit, 2020; Finardi, Mendes, & Silva, 2022). Instead, critical voices of this process suggest that in Latin America this process should be more inclusive (Finardi & Guimarães, 2020), situated (Leal, Finardi, & Abba, 2022, Abba, Leal, & Finardi, 2022) and involve more South-South partnerships (e.g. Finardi et al., 2020).

Notwithstanding this criticism and according to Leal, Finardi and Abba (2022), the process of IHE in Latin America is a dynamic and evolving one, influenced by regional and global trends. While the region has historically faced structural and economic challenges,

universities and policymakers are increasingly recognizing the value of IHE to boost quality of education (Ortiz-Rojo & Finardi, 2023) academic excellence (Finardi & Amorim, 2023), social development, global engagement and citizenship education (Guimarães & Finardi, 2021).

Unlike traditional interpretations that prioritize outbound student mobility, many Latin American institutions are now turning to ‘internationalization at home’ (IaH) approaches that integrate international elements into their tripartite mission without requiring physical mobility. This approach is particularly relevant given financial constraints and socioeconomic inequalities that limit access to international experiences for many students.

Just like other processes, the IHE in Latin America is shaped by both internal and external drivers. On the internal side, universities seek to enhance their global competitiveness, improve the quality of education, and foster multicultural learning environments. However, it is important to note that public universities in Brazil charge no fees, so the competitiveness of Brazilian universities is not related to a financial interest to attract fees from international students as a motivation for their IHE process (Finardi & Ortiz, 2015). Externally, globalization, regional integration (e.g., through organizations like Mercosur), and international ranking systems (see for example Finardi & Guimarães, 2017 for the case of Brazil) push institutions to expand their global presence.

Persisting challenges include unequal access to international opportunities, insufficient funding, linguistic barriers, and a lack of cohesive regional policies. While English is often the lingua franca of global academia (see for example Taquini, Finardi, & Amorim, 2017; Finardi & Helm, in press), many Latin American universities operate primarily in Spanish or Portuguese, in the case of Brazil (see for example the Guide to English Medium Instruction in Brazil published as Gimenez et al., 2018), creating additional barriers for student and faculty mobility.

As the region navigates economic and social transformations, IHE must adapt to shifting priorities. Greater investment in digital learning tools and Virtual Exchange (VE) to substitute and/or complement physical academic mobility (e.g., Guimarães et al., 2019; Finardi & Guimarães, 2019; Guimarães, Finardi, & Amorim, 2021; Guimarães & Finardi, 2021; Mendes & Finardi, 2023; Guimarães & Finardi, 2023; Finardi, Salvadori, & Wehrli, 2024; Finardi & Asik, 2024; Wimpenny et al., 2022; Orsini-Jones et al., 2025), regional cooperation, and inclusive policies can enhance the impact of internationalization. Ultimately, a balanced approach that integrates both outbound mobility and IaH will ensure that internationalization contributes meaningfully to the development of higher education and society at large in Latin America and globally.

Considering the role of Peruvian and Brazilian HEIs in the region, these two countries were chosen due to the similarity of the number of public universities, 50 and 62, respectively. Also, we aim to analyze whether there is a relation between internationalization in those universities and international rankings, as Brazil has 44 of its federal universities (only 18 were not listed in the ranking of 2000 best HEIs worldwide), while Peruvian national universities are not ranked, with only 2 private institutions in the list, despite having created

their universities over three and a half centuries ahead Brazil. In what follows a brief contextualization of the process of IHE in Brazil will be offered.

3. Internationalization of Higher Education in Brazil

When it comes to the largest player in the region and as argued by Amorim and Finardi (2022), the process of IHE in Brazil has undergone significant transformations in recent years, particularly in response to global shifts and challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Amorim and Finardi (2022) discuss this process through the lens of institutional self-assessment, emphasizing the need for Brazilian higher education institutions (HEIs) to critically evaluate their internationalization strategies.

A central theme in their analysis is the metaphor of bifurcation, inspired by Robert Frost's poem, which presents two possible directions for internationalization: competition and cooperation. Traditionally, internationalization in Brazil has been shaped by competitive models, focusing on rankings (Finardi & Guimarães, 2017), publication impact, and imbalanced partnerships with the Global North (e.g., Finardi et al., 2020).

Another important aspect of internationalization in Brazil is the increasing emphasis on regional and South-South collaborations. Traditional partnerships with North American and European institutions remain significant (see for example Finardi et al., 2020; Finardi, França, & Guimarães, 2022, 2023), but there is a growing recognition of the value of strengthening ties within Latin America, Africa, and Asia (e.g. Finardi, Amorim, & Sarmento, 2024). This shift is in line with the broader global movement towards a more inclusive and equitable internationalization process.

Furthermore, the discussion in Amorim and Finardi (2022) highlights the importance of language policies and linguistic diversity in internationalization efforts. English proficiency remains a key factor in accessing global academic networks, yet there is also an increasing advocacy for multilingual approaches (Finardi, 2022) that recognize and incorporate Portuguese (Guimarães & Finardi, 2021) and other languages spoken in Brazil (e.g. Peres, Finardi, & Calazans, 2020; Finardi, 2017, 2018)

4. Internationalization of Higher Education in Peru

Rios-Campos et al. (2022) conducted a documentary research study to analyze articles and websites regarding internationalization in Peruvian universities, highlighting the need for both the formulation and implementation of internationalization strategies in public and private contexts. They also view this process as a priority and emphasize the significant role of initiatives such as the *Red Peruana de Universidades Públicas para la Internacionalización* (RUNAi), the *Red Interuniversitaria del Sur del Perú* (Redisur), and the *Red Peruana para la Internacionalización de la Educación Superior Universitaria* (REDIPERÚ), alongside international relations offices. These networks also receive external support from organizations such as the British Council and the Austrian government (Timana, 2022). According to this author, with Austrian support, Peruvian organizations such as the *Ministerio de Educación* (MINEDU), the *Superintendencia Nacional de Educación Superior Universitaria* (Sunedu), the *Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores*, and the *Consejo Nacional*

de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación Tecnológica (CONCYTEC), which had previously established the *Mesa de Internacionalización de la Educación Superior* (*Mesa IntEdu*), also launched the *Ventanilla Única para la Internacionalización de la Educación Superior*. This project materialized as a guide titled *Guía para Internacionalización de la Educación Superior Peruana* (Note 11), intended for Peruvian students and professors. The guide provides orientation on obtaining student visas, legalizing certificates, accessing lists of universities and consulates abroad, consulting agreements established by Peruvian universities, guidelines for degree validation, and international scholarship announcements, among other topics.

Mlodzianowska et al. (2024) report on an international collaboration between three universities in Peru and India, emphasizing that, while this practice has become more popular due to the pandemic, it still requires further analysis. They mention the *Global Virtual Team* (GVT) and *Collaborative Online International Learning* (COIL), suggesting that teacher preparation to conduct classes using the latter methodology is crucial, given obstacles such as time zone differences, scheduling conflicts, language barriers, and low student participation. Nevertheless, the results indicated improvements in communication and collaboration skills, intercultural understanding, and appreciation of other cultures, as students valued the opportunity to converse with peers of different nationalities and learn about each other's cultures.

In her study, Moya Gonzales (2024) asserts that internationalization is not a luxury but a necessity requiring immediate action. She contrasts factors that hindered the internationalization of higher education in Peru and Colombia between 2014 and 2021. According to the author, Colombia was chosen due to its progress in this process over eight years, while Peru lacks a clear internationalization policy, with bureaucracy, weak governmental coordination, and insufficient political incentives among the main causes. In another comparative study between Peru and Ecuador, with a similar time frame (2014 to 2024), Rios-Campos (2024) states that private universities lead internationalization efforts in Peru and highlighted the disparity in internationalization scores. The leading university scored 100 points, whereas the lowest-ranking institution scored only 5.1 points. In Ecuador, despite challenges, 49 higher education institutions (HEIs) belonging to the *Asamblea de la Red Ecuatoriana para la Internacionalización de la Educación Superior* (REIES) and other HEIs are taking actions to achieve internationalization within their institutions.

Regarding Peru and Chile, Tacto Gallegos (2024) discusses internationalization policies and academic mobility in Tacna and Arica, border cities approximately 57 km apart. The author notes that formal and informal exchanges between these cities are underutilized and highlights the need to adhere to *Ley Universitaria 30220*, leverage digital means to enable new learning opportunities, and resume sectors that ceased functioning during the pandemic to enhance quality, competitiveness, and employability.

Villacís (2025) points out that mirror classes are conducted with technological support in synchronous sessions involving students and professors from different universities. This teaching modality allows students to develop global competencies despite obstacles such as

connectivity issues and varying student proficiency levels. Yangali Vicente (2021) corroborates this by stating that this practice facilitates the democratic exchange of knowledge and promotes the development of research-related skills, particularly among undergraduate students, being frequently employed as a pedagogical strategy in Latin American universities. According to Pulido et al. (2023, as cited in Villacís, 2025), Latin America has the highest reported practice of mirror classes in academic articles, with Peru and Colombia leading publications on the topic in the process of internationalizing higher education. Salas (2019, as cited in Villacís, 2025) also advocated for mirror classes as a practical strategy for internationalization and research based on an experience involving universities in Peru and Costa Rica.

Fernandéz (2022) argues that there is no governmental support for establishing a transversal policy across all universities. Consequently, private universities, which have their own funding and specialized managers, implement more internationalization strategies than public universities. The author also mentions that the pandemic brought benefits to departments that quickly adapted to the new context, such as mirror classes (where participating universities share the same curriculum and content) and virtual collaborations. According to her, the latter shifted the focus from students to professors, encouraging them to develop internationalization-at-home strategies, thereby democratizing the process. She further notes that this process should not be replicated from other universities but conceptualized according to the unique characteristics of each institution.

Gomez Valdez (2022) analyzes the various international models within the Peruvian university system, mentioning their convergence towards international quality, which is measured through the Shanghai Ranking. This ranking is one of the most important, alongside the QS World University Rankings and Times Higher Education World University Rankings, aiming to classify universities based on academic performance. The author asserts that *Ley 30220*, the current university law, does not align with international standards concerning faculty, students, staff, and infrastructure management. He suggests admitting highly qualified students and adopting international quality requirements. Regarding faculty improvement, the author proposes that universities adopt the Brazilian or Singaporean model, utilizing meritocracy to drive improvements in the Peruvian university system. In the document regulating this law, articulated by MINEDU (Note 12), internationalization is one of the seventeen principles guiding universities, and “promoting sustainable human development at the local, regional, national, and *global* levels” (translated and emphasized by us) is one of their ten objectives.

5. Methodology

This study aims to analyze the process of internationalization of higher education in Brazil and Peru contrasting the scenarios in those two countries. With that aim, our date comprises a sample of 118 federal public universities made up of 69 Brazilian federal public universities and 49 Peruvian national universities (Note 13). The criteria for this selection considered that it is more intuitive to compare only universities, given that other institutions (in Peru: university-level institutes, higher pedagogical education institutes, higher technological

education institutes, higher artistic education institutes, technological higher education institutes of the armed forces and police, and technical-productive education centers; and in Brazil: university centers, colleges, and federal institutes or Cefets) may have distinct guidelines in the two countries.

In order to obtain the list of Brazilian federal public universities, the website of ANDIFES (Note 14) was accessed. The names of the 69 federal public universities were identified, subdivided according to the states they are located. Subsequently, the website of each institution, accessed via hyperlink, was examined for evidence of internationalization on its menu or “*internacional*” and “*internacionalização*” (Portuguese) on its search engine.

In order to obtain the list of national public universities in Peru, the SUNEDU website was accessed. This entity is responsible for verifying and evaluating the quality of university educational services and managing university information, among other duties. A list containing the names of 49 national public universities was found. Subsequently, the website of each institution was accessed, for evidence of internationalization on its menu or “*internacional*” and “*internacionalización*” (Spanish) on its search engine.

6. Results and discussion

The official websites of Brazilian federal public universities and Peruvian national universities follow the same pattern regarding their online addresses, namely “[abbreviation/acronym].br” and “[abbreviation/acronym/name].edu.pe”, respectively. Each has its own unique layout, which requires that evidence of internationalization be sought through different pathways. Table 1 below indicates which Brazilian universities websites mention the evidence cited in the previous section:

Table 1. Evidence of Internationalization in Brazilian federal public universities websites

| Brazilian federal universities | Evidence of internationalization |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Universidade Federal do Acre (UFAC) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal de Alagoas (UFAL) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Amapá (UNIFAP) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Amazonas (UFAM) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Bahia (UFBA) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Oeste da Bahia (UFOB) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Recôncavo da Bahia (UFRB) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Sul da Bahia (UFSB) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal da Lusofonia Afro-Brasileira (UNILAB) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Vale do São Francisco (UNIVASF) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Ceará (UFC) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Cariri (UFCA) | ✓ |
| Universidade de Brasília (UnB) | ✓ |
| Universidade do Espírito Santo (UFES) | ✓ |

| | |
|--|---|
| Universidade Federal de Goiás (UFG) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal de Catalão (UFCAT) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal de Jataí (UFJ) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Maranhão (UFMA) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Mato Grosso (UFMT) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal de Rondonópolis (UFR) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal da Grande Dourados (UFGD) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto (UFOP) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal de Uberlândia (UFU) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal dos Vales do Jequitinhonha e Mucuri (UFVJM) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Triângulo Mineiro (UFTM) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal de São João del-Rei (UFSJ) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal de Viçosa (UFV) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal de Lavras (UFLA) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal de Juiz de Fora (UFJF) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal de Alfenas (UNIFAL-MG) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal de Itajubá (UNIFEI) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Pará (UFPA) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal Sul e Sudeste do Pará (UNIFESSPA) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Oeste do Pará (UFOPA) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal Rural da Amazônia (UFRA) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal da Paraíba (UFPB) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal de Campina Grande (UFCG) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Paraná (UFPR) | ✓ |
| Universidade Tecnológica Federal do Paraná (UTFPR) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal da Integração Latino-Americana (UNILA) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal da Fronteira Sul (UFFS) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal de Pernambuco (UFPE) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal Rural de Pernambuco (UFRPE) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Agreste de Pernambuco (UFAPE) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Piauí (UFPI) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Delta do Parnaíba (UFDPAR) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UNIRIO) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro (UFRRJ) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal Rural do Semi-Árido (UFERSA) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal de Pelotas (UFPEL) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Rio Grande (FURG) | ✓ |

| | |
|--|---|
| Universidade Federal de Ciências da Saúde de Porto Alegre (UFCSPA) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Pampa (UNIPAMPA) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal de Rondônia (UNIR) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal de Roraima (UFRR) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal de São Paulo (UNIFESP) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal de São Carlos (UFSCAR) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do ABC (UFABC) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal de Sergipe (UFS) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Tocantins (UFT) | ✓ |
| Universidade Federal do Norte do Tocantins (UFNT) | ✓ |

Source: authors.

In Table 1, the evidence of internationalization found on the websites of Brazilian federal universities is diverse and reflects a range of actions from symbolic gestures to well-structured initiatives. The Federal University of Acre (UFAC), for instance, stands out for receiving Bolivian students, participating in international events in Switzerland, and organizing local discussions on internationalization. The Federal University of Amazonas (UFAM) reports partnerships with institutions from 49 countries. The Federal University of Recôncavo da Bahia (UFRB) and the Federal University of Piauí (UFPI) mention mobility programs with countries such as Portugal, Mexico, Spain, the United States, and Japan.

Other institutions invest in initiatives for welcoming international students, such as the Federal University of Amapá (UNIFAP), which offers Portuguese language courses for beginners and an international student guide in English and Spanish. The Federal University of Itajubá (UNIFEI) includes the term “international” in its main menu, with a dedicated section for incoming students. Similarly, the Federal University of Maranhão (UFMA) offers its website in five languages and maintains partnerships with countries such as Mozambique and France.

The Federal University of Bahia (UFBA) selects students for master’s programs in Norway and reports faculty participation in events in Guinea-Bissau. The Federal University of Rio Grande (FURG) highlights participation in events in Portugal, the United States, and BRICS countries, while UFERSA organizes events specifically to discuss internationalization.

In the southern region, the Federal University of Santa Maria (UFSM) has a cooperation agreement with Cape Verde and conducts outreach activities in Germany and Spain. The Federal University of Pampa (UNIPAMPA) reports dual-degree doctoral programs and participation in international programs in Africa. The Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) includes “Internationalization” in its main menu and maintains agreements with universities from all seven continents, including integration and support initiatives for migrants and refugees. The Federal University of São Paulo (UNIFESP) prioritizes South-South cooperation, hosts lectures with African professors, and maintains

English-language sections for foreign visitors.

In the Southeast, the Federal University of Viçosa (UFV) offers an English version of its website and programs for international students. The Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) features support for foreign students and exchange programs on its homepage. The Federal University of São Carlos (UFSCar) includes a section for foreign visitors, while the Federal University of ABC (UFABC) highlights its internationalized academic output.

Several universities have active international relations departments, such as the Federal University of Espírito Santo (UFES), which reports over 38,000 search results related to internationalization and promotes COIL activities and virtual exchanges with institutions in Europe, Asia, and Latin America. The Federal University of Roraima (UFRR) fosters academic mobility with Latin American and Caribbean countries, organizes events on internationalization, and participates in national programs such as CELPE-Bras and “Languages without Borders.”

The University for International Integration of the Afro-Brazilian Lusophony (UNILAB) runs international student selection programs and provides guidance on migration and visa procedures, while the Federal University of the São Francisco Valley (UNIVASF) has partnerships across the Americas, Africa, Europe, and Asia. The Federal University of the Jequitinhonha and Mucuri Valleys (UFVJM) offers language exchange programs in multiple languages, and UFSJ has a dedicated international affairs office.

The Federal University of Ceará (UFC) reports agreements with 197 international institutions, and UFCA maintains agreements with six countries, including Cape Verde, Spain, and Romania. The University of Brasília (UnB) publishes calls for staff participation in international events, while UFJ reports over 100 internationalization actions in graduate programs.

Likewise, the Federal University of Goiás (UFG) promotes inbound mobility for faculty from Italy, and UFCAT administers foreign language proficiency exams. The Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU) offers guidelines and open calls for both inbound and outbound mobility. The Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS) maintains mobility programs for undergraduate and graduate students. The Federal University of Rondonópolis (UFR) emphasizes international research activities, with faculty engaged in cooperation with Egypt, China, and Uruguay.

The Federal University of Pernambuco (UFPE) lists over 160 international partners and offers an English version of its website. The Federal University of Lavras (UFLA) offers English proficiency tests to economically vulnerable students. The Federal University of the Triângulo Mineiro (UFTM) organizes welcome weeks for international students under the PEC-G program, and UFJF offers over 200 spots for students from Latin America and the Caribbean.

Other internationalization efforts include faculty visits from abroad (UNIFAL-MG), awards in BRICS-related courses (UFPB), student participation in events in Japan (UFRA), and dedicated international offices or mobility programs at UFPEL, UFOPA, UFRPE, UFRGS,

UFRN, UFRRJ, and UNIRIO. The Federal University of Delta do Parnaíba (UFDPa) has agreements with institutions in Portugal, Argentina, and the United States, while UFAPE participates in the AULP mobility program for Portuguese-speaking countries. UFFS maintains partnerships with universities in Latin America, Europe, and Africa.

Finally, the Federal University of Rondônia (UNIR) is advancing in academic agreements with Bolivia, and the Federal University of Technology – Paraná (UTFPR) has maintained international partnerships since the 1990s, with intensified efforts since the 2000s, including dual-degree programs. The Federal University of Campina Grande (UFCG) disseminates international research funding calls, and the Federal University of Pará (UFPA) participates in academic mobility programs coordinated by the Association of Portuguese Language Universities (AULP).

Table 2 shows national Peruvian universities websites which mention the evidence cited in the previous section:

Table 2. Evidence of Internationalization in Peruvian national universities websites

| Peruvian national universities | Evidence of internationalization |
|--|----------------------------------|
| Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos (UNMSM) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional San Cristóbal de Huamanga (UNSH) | - |
| Universidad Nacional de San Antonio Abad del Cusco (UNSAAC) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional de Trujillo (UNT) | - |
| Universidade Nacional de San Augustin de Arequipa (UNSA) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional de Ingeniería (UNI) | - |
| Universidad Nacional Agraria La Molina (UNALM) | - |
| Universidad Nacional San Luis Gonzaga (UNICA) | - |
| Universidad Nacional del Centro del Perú (UNCP) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional de la Amazonía Peruana (UNAP 1) | - |
| Universidad Nacional del Altiplano Puno (UNAP 2) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional de Piura (UNP) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional de Cajamarca (UNC) | - |
| Universidad Nacional Federico Villarreal (UNFV) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional Agraria de la Selva (UNAS) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional Hermilio Valdizan (UNHEVAL) | - |
| Universidad Nacional de Educación Enrique Guzmán y Valle (UNE) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional Daniel Alcides Carrión (UNDAC) | - |
| Universidad Nacional del Callao (UNAC) | - |
| Universidad Nacional José Faustino Sánchez Carrión (UNJFSC) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional Pedro Ruiz Gallo (UNPRG) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional Jorge Basadre Grohmann (UNJBG) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional Santiago Antúnez de Mayolo (UNASAM) | - |
| Universidad Nacional de San Martín (UNSAM) | ✓ |

| | |
|--|---|
| Universidad Nacional De Ucayali (UNU) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional de Tumbes (UNTUMBES) | - |
| Universidad Nacional del Santa (UNS) | - |
| Universidad Nacional de Huancavelica (UNH) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional Amazónica de Madre de Dios (UNAMAD) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional Toribio Rodríguez de Mendoza de Amazonas (UNTRM) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional Micaela Bastidas de Apurímac (UNAMBA) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional Intercultural de la Amazonía (UNIA) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional Tecnológica de Lima Sur (UNTELS) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional José María Arguedas (UNAJMA) | - |
| Universidad Nacional de Moquegua (UNAM) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional de Juliaca (UNAJ) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional de Jaén (UNJ) | - |
| Universidad Nacional de Frontera (UNF) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Chota (UNACH) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional de Barranca (UNAB) | - |
| Universidad Nacional de Cañete (UNDC) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional Intercultural Fabiola Salazar (UNIFSLB) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional Intercultural de la Selva Central Juan Santos Atahualpa (UNISJCA) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional Intercultural de Quillabamba (UNIQ) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Alto Amazonas (UNAAA) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional Autónoma Altoandina de Tarma (UNAAAT) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Huanta (UNAH) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Tayacaja Daniel Hernández Morillo (UNAT) | ✓ |
| Universidad Nacional Ciro Alegría (UNCA) | - |

Source: authors.

As can be seen in Table 2, out of 49 national universities, 32 show evidence of internationalization in their websites (65,31%), whereas 17 do not show any evidence (34,69%).

It was possible to find several pieces of evidence of internationalization, such as: UNJFSC hosted the ambassador of Uruguay to discuss free trade between both countries; UNAMAD had the participation of a professor in an event in China and has cooperation with Brazil and Bolivia; UNFV has cooperation with Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Spain and Romania; UNJBG promoted a project named “*Conversemos en Inglés*” with Colombian students to boost virtual mobility; UNH hosted a Mexican professor and offers scholarships for its students to study abroad; UNAH mentioned student mobility to Brazil and the UK; UNP mentioned the cooperation with Spanish universities; UNIFSLB and UNAAA presented information about its international office; UNU shared its institutional strategic plan including international

cooperation; UNAS and UNALM shared information for student mobility in Mexico; UNIQ has cooperation with universities from the USA; UNMSM shows the term “internationalization” on its initial page, as it receives many international students; UNAT uses Webometrics to boost its international presence; UNAM showed its initial steps to establish cooperation with a university from the USA; UNASAM participates in seminars about internationalization; UNACH has partnership with Chilean, Ecuadorian, Brazilian and Russian universities; and UNAJ focuses on student mobility.

Considering our data and the contrast between the two countries, it is possible to say that Brazil is more explicit in its internationalization strategies, as seen in the sites of Brazilian universities. Though Peruvian universities are older and show a better ratio per number of inhabitant than Brazil, they are not as well ranked in international rankings and do not have an explicit strategy as shown in their website.

7. Final Considerations

This study aimed to reflect on the process of internationalization of higher education (IHE) in Latin America, with a focus on Brazil and Peru as representative cases. While Peru holds the historical advantage of having the oldest university in the region and a higher density of HEIs per capita, Brazilian universities dominate international rankings and scientific production. However, the analysis of institutional websites reveals a more nuanced picture.

The data shows that 65.31% of Peruvian national universities and most of Brazilian federal universities provide explicit online evidence of internationalization. In Brazil, this is often linked to robust international partnerships, scientific research visibility, and multilingual communication strategies. Peru, on the other hand, demonstrates a strong commitment to regional cooperation, government-supported guides, and virtual mobility practices, despite not having nationally ranked public universities.

These findings illustrate not only different stages but also distinct approaches to internationalization, shaped by national contexts, priorities, and resources. Brazil appears to lean on academic prestige and productivity, while Peru emphasizes accessible and structured internationalization policies.

Ultimately, this comparative study highlights the importance of looking beyond traditional indicators such as rankings and publication metrics. It points to the relevance of qualitative dimensions—such as inclusiveness, transparency, and visibility in digital platforms—as essential elements for assessing IHE in Latin America. As such, internationalization should be understood as a multidimensional and context-sensitive process, especially in regions like Latin America where structural inequalities and geopolitical dynamics shape access to the global academic sphere.

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Notes

Note 1. Retrieved from <https://www.cnnbrasil.com.br/educacao/quais-as-universidades-mais-antigas-do-brasil/>

Note 2. Retrieved from <https://www.unmsm.edu.pe/noticias-y-eventos/noticias/noticia-detalle/san-marcos-cumple-47-2-anos-de-historia-y-lo-celebra-con-programa-de-actividades-academicas-y->

Note 3. Retrieved from https://www.inei.gob.pe/media/MenuRecursivo/noticias/np_105_2019_inei.pdf

Note 4. Retrieved from https://download.inep.gov.br/publicacoes/institucionais/estatisticas_e_indicadores/notas_estatisticas_censo_da_educacao_superior_2020.pdf

Note 5. Retrieved from <https://www.sunedu.gob.pe/universidades-publicas/>

Note 6. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.br/mec/pt-br/areas-de-atuacao/es/universidades-federais>

Note 7. The population of Peru is approximately 31.2 million people, according to the 2017 census. This number places Peru as the fifth most populous country in South America. Furthermore, it is estimated that the Peruvian population will reach around 46 to 51 million by 2050. Retrieved from <https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peruanos>

Note 8. The population of Brazil is approximately 212 million people, according to 2024 estimates. Retrieved from <https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brasil>

Note 9. Retrieved from <https://cwur.org/2024.php>

Note 10. According to Dados and Connell (2012) the term Global North refers to a relation of power, coloniality and global economic structures, so, it is not limited to geographic position, but geopolitics.

Note 11. Retrieved from <https://cdn.www.gob.pe/uploads/document/file/3712368/Gu%C3%ADa%20para%20la%20Internacionalizaci%C3%B3n%20de%20la%20Educaci%C3%B3n%20Superior%20Peruana%20030-09.pdf?v=1664559911>

Note 12. Retrieved from

https://www.minedu.gob.pe/reforma-universitaria/pdf/ley_universitaria_04_02_2022.pdf

Note 13. Retrieved from <https://www.sunedu.gob.pe/universidades-publicas/>

Note 14. Retrieved from <https://www.andifes.org.br/2025/01/16/brasil-tem-69-universidades-federais-conheca-cada-uma/>

About the authors

Reninni Taquini holds a Ph.D. in Education with a focus on Education and Languages from the Graduate Program in Education at the Federal University of Espírito Santo (UFES). She also holds a master's degree in Education and a bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature from the same institution.

Kyria Rebeca Finardi is an Associate Professor in the Department of Languages, Culture and Education and a faculty member in the Graduate Program in Education at the Federal University of Espírito Santo (UFES). She is also part of the university's Permanent Board of Internationalization. She currently serves as President of the International Association of Applied Linguistics (AILA), is a former President of the Brazilian Association of Applied Linguistics (ALAB), and co-founded and coordinates the Ibero-America Association of Applied Linguistics (AIALA).

Roberta Gomes Leão holds a Ph.D. in Education with a focus on Education and Languages from the Graduate Program in Education at the Federal University of Espírito Santo (UFES). She also holds a master's degree in Education and a bachelor's degree in English Language and Literature from the same institution.

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