

# Fostering Reputation of Higher Education Institutions in International Ranking by Means of Diversity of International Collaboration

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**Abstract:** Global ranking, known as the global league tables of Universities, is a relatively recent phenomenon. The rapid and worldwide dissemination of annual international rankings of universities and the inevitable influence they have on Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) and other parties who interact with them is well recognised. An important aspect included in the different Rankings is related with Internationalisation. International partnerships between universities are beneficial to all, from the staff and students to the world as a whole. In that way, in this paper is described a proposal about increase reputation offering different internationalisation mechanisms. A survey was done in different HEI's in Iberoamerican countries (Staff, Professors, Students) to determine the most important aspects need to be considered.

**Keywords:** Fostering Reputation, Ranking, Collaboration

## 1 Introduction

Currently, the ranking of Higher Education Institutions (HEI's) has become a major, ubiquitous, even explosive, phenomenon. As has been mentioned by King and Locke, the impact of different rankings on both national policy-making and institutional strategies and behaviour has also been far-reaching (King and Locke, 2008). In spite of all, university rankings feature highly among the hotly debated issues in education, it is becoming an important issue in order to maintain reputation.

The popularity of rankings is partly a reflection of the increasingly pervasive 'culture of accountability' in policy agendas, as well as societal demands for access to information in both the public and private spheres. In this context, HEI's have faced growing pressures to develop instruments to measure, classify and track their performance in academic and administrative areas, resulting in evaluation dynamics with wide-ranging goals (Bolseguí and Fuguet, 2006).

In order to have better-placed universities, global rankings become an important and effective tool for building and maintaining reputations, both of which are important for attracting talent and resources and gaining support from the general public. There is greater demand than ever for

comparative information on international universities. This demand comes from the institutions themselves to assess their competitive position, governments who have to ensure the quality of higher education and research and have to rationalize resource allocations, and students seeking to make the best choice of university. For universities involved in international competition, world university rankings could be a highly important element through which international recognition can be obtained. Regardless of their controversial nature, global university rankings are now a reality, are already exerting substantial influence on the long-term development of higher education across the world, and are likely here to stay (Marginson and van der Wende, 2007). One of the element which is considered in different rankings is related with Internationalisation. Almost everyone accepts that strong internationalization goes hand in hand with the quality of the HEI's, the international dimension and the position of HEI's in the global arena are given greater emphasis in international,

national and institutional documents and mission statements than ever before (Knight, 2006). Internationalization has been one of the most powerful and pervasive forces at work within HEI's around the world during the last two decades. Collaboration with international universities provide news views for the academics to develop more comprehensive and detailed research which usually contains more important and

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significant results that improve the produced research. It is important to understand what the best options for each university are based on each subject, which are the best universities to collaborate with according to each subject, how to know the best options, from which countries, and with which academics. In that way, this paper depicts a strategy to foster internationalisation and have as a consequence a better reputation and improve the HEI's ranking. This paper is structured as follows: Next section a conceptualization about Rankings and Internationalisation is presented. Then the model proposed based on a survey with different actors of HEI's is depicted. In Section 4 a discussion is presented, and finally some conclusions and further work are described.

## 2 Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Rankings

As Marginson (Marginson, 2007), has pointed out, ranking is popular and has most certainly overshadowed the interest in quality assurance and national research assessment. It will most likely have an impact on many aspects of higher education. Given its powerful effect on public opinion and its place amongst the instruments used by international students for the selection of their foreign place of study, it is likely that one way or another institutions will be drawn towards it, even if only to ensure their rightful place in the ranking order of these league tables.

Global university rankings, although of interest to prospective students and employers, receive most of their attention from governments and universities themselves. With the emergence of the knowledge-based economy, research universities are expected to play a key role in building the core competitiveness of countries.

Different global rankings have different purposes, and they only measure parts of universities activities. Rankings compare different HEIs using a range of indicators to measure different aspects of higher education. Some of the most common ranking around the world are:

- Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) (est. 2003) <http://www.shanghairanking.com/>.
- Performance Ranking of Scientific Papers for World Universities (National Taiwanese University, NTU), (est. 2007), <http://nturanking.lis.ntu.edu.tw/>.
- QS World University Rankings (Quacquarelli Symonds, QS), (est. 2004) <https://www.topuniversities.com/qs-world-university-rankings>.
- Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE), (est. 2004) <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings>.
- University Ranking by Academic Performance (Informatics Institute of Middle East Technical University, URAP) (est. 2009), <http://www.urapcenter.org>.
- US News and World Report Best Global University

Rankings (USNWR) <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-global-universities>.

Traditionally, some of these rankings measure aspects related with [Hazelkorn, 2012]:

- Bio and medical science research
- Publication in Nature and Science
- Student and faculty characteristics (e.g. productivity, entry criteria, faculty/student ratio)
- Internationalization
- Reputation – among peers, employers, students.

### 2.2 Internationalisation

Internationality and 'internationalization have become the buzz words in higher education over the last years. International references and international exchange form part of the core thinking of modern higher education institutions. HEI's around the world are increasingly demonstrating a commitment to the internationalisation process and have assumed a wide variety of activities and organisational strategies to achieve internationalisation (DeWit, 1995).

The internationalization of a higher education institution is a change process from a national higher education institution to an international higher education institution leading to the inclusion of an international dimension in all aspects of its holistic management in order to enhance the quality of teaching and learning and to achieve the desired competencies. (Söderqvist, 2002).

It could be mentioned internationalisation is a relative recent concept, which has taken great importance in the last years due to globalization phenomenon in the HEI structure. In other words, although there is an increasing emphasis on economic rationales, it would be too simple to state that the changing landscape of internationalisation is developing in similar ways in higher education throughout the world (Knight, 2006). The internationalization in HEI's, in itself an answer to and agent of the globalization of our society, has an enormous influence on the development and innovation of HEI's, as it opens these institutions to experiences from elsewhere in the world and to the global knowledge society. The internationalization of higher education is a theme that is becoming increasingly important in regional, national and institutional strategies in higher education. At the same time, this international dimension of higher education is becoming more and more diverse and complex. In order to help HEI's to include internationalisation policies, next section describe a proposal to foster reputation including Internationalisation mechanisms.

**Table 1:** Summarises the major Global Rankings and the Publisher/Compiler.

| Ranking  | Compiler/Publisher   |
|--|--|
| Academic Ranking of World Universities                         | Shanghai Ranking Consultancy   |
| QS World University Rankings                                   | QS Quacquarelli Symonds Ltd  |
| Ranking Web of World Universities                              | Webometrics  |
| Performance Ranking of Scientific Papers of World Universities | Higher Education Evaluation and Accreditation Council of Taiwan (HEEACT) |
| Times Higher Education World University Rankings               | Times Higher Education and Thomson Reuters                               |

Table 1. Major global rankings by principal perceived [Sowter, 2011].

### 3 Models Proposed

The objectives of internationalization may be achieved through a wide variety of activities and strategies, some of which serve several and different goals. For example, offering programmes taught in other languages may both attract more international students (serving the objective of ‘continuity’) and facilitate student exchanges (serving the objective of ‘development of the international and intercultural competencies of students’). This example also shows that some activities are, in fact, also prerequisites for other activities. They may, in fact, be seen as support structures for internationalization. This implies that HEI’s are being forced to respond to the changes they are confronted with, which requires them to undergo a process of reflection on the role and traditional functions they have played in the past and the new role they will have to play in the future. In this process of reflection, planning plays an important role in helping the institutions to prepare for the reformulation of their objectives, strategies, policies and targets. International partnerships between universities are beneficial to all, from the staff and students to the world as a whole.

One important aspects is to define a Strategic planning for internationalization. It is important to ensure a clear definition of internationalization, determine what parameters one particular institution contemplates for internationalisation from its unique perspective and the reasons it intends to engage in international activity. The development of a strategy for internationalization is an important issue. In that way, a survey was done in different HEI’s in Iberoamerica (Staff, Researchers, Students), in order to determine the impact of Internationalisation and the most relevant aspects need to be considered.

#### 3.1 Survey

In the survey 51 participants from HEI’s of different Iberoamerican countries like Colombia, Panamá, Costa

Rica, Spain, Perú, México, Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Portugal and Ecuador. On this survey participated at least one person from Staff, Researchers and Students (undergraduate/graduate programmes).

There were only 2 questions: (1) Do you think internationalisation is an important element in the reputation of the HEI’s?; (2) What elements do you think be considered as the most relevant in the internationalisation process?

#### 3.2 Results Analysis

In total there were 839 responses from 11 different Iberoamerican countries, obtaining the major responses of HEI’s in Colombia. Figure 1 depicts the information of the different countries, where 51 Universities responded the survey:

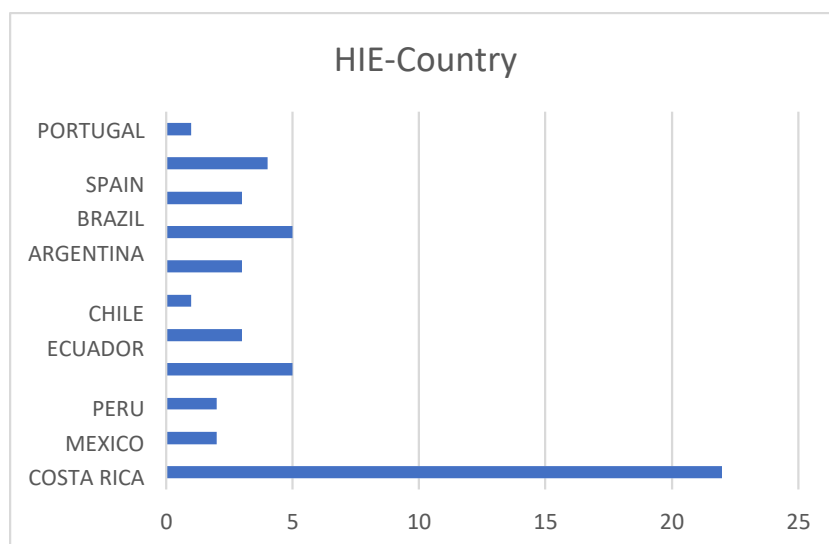
There was an interesting participation of Staff, Researchers, students (undergraduate and graduate programmes). Figure 2 depicts the main results obtained, where the main results come from students (undergraduate).

About the first question, the major people agreed the importance of Internationalisation in the reputation process of HEI’s. In the Staff all people were agreed. Figure 3 depicts the results.

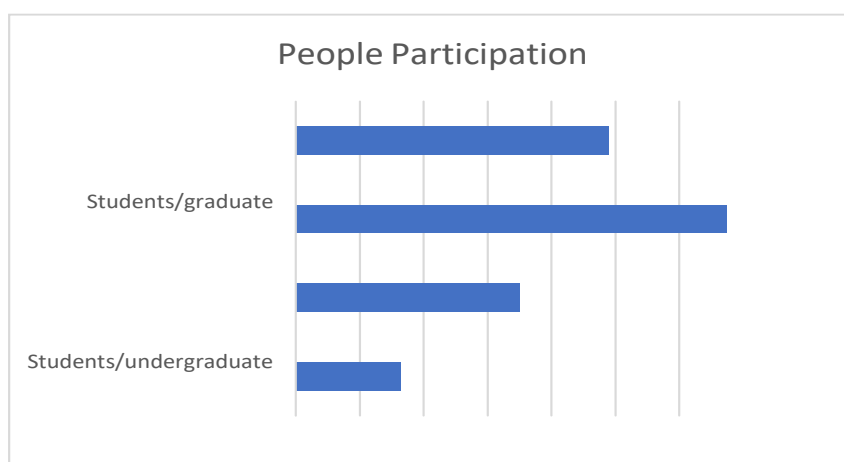
About the most important aspects people think is need to be considered in order to have a better internationalisation process in HEI’s, there were a lot of elements proposed. Figure 4 depict the aspects proposed by the Staff people of HEI’s surveyed

Figure 5 present the main results given by the researchers, highlighting elements like: Research Projects, Research publications, Cooperation Networks, etc.

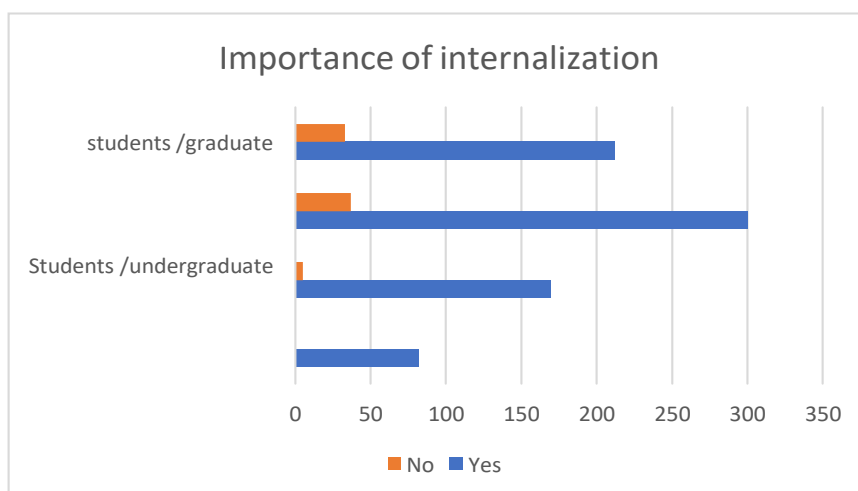
About students (undergraduate and graduate) perception about the most relevant aspects of internationalisation, they argued the importance of mobility, second-language skills, etc.



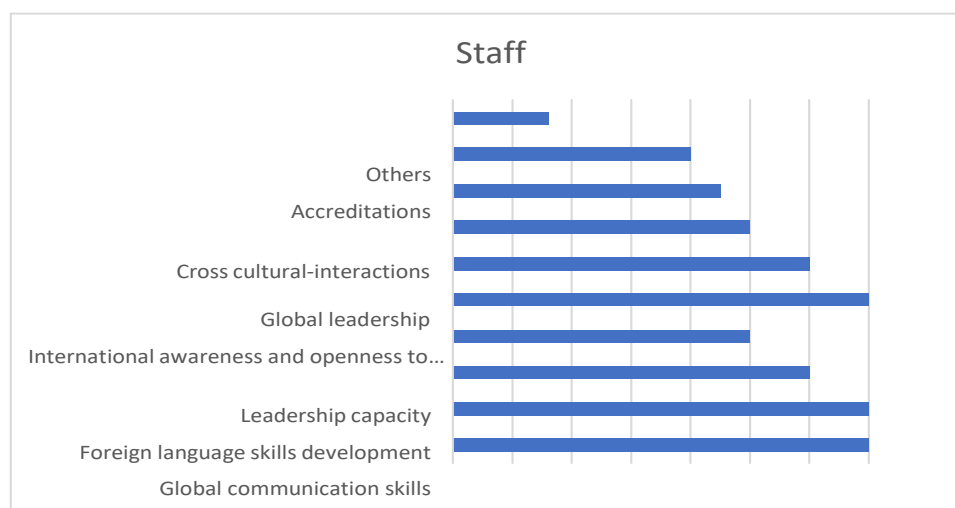
**Fig.1:** HEI's/Country participation.



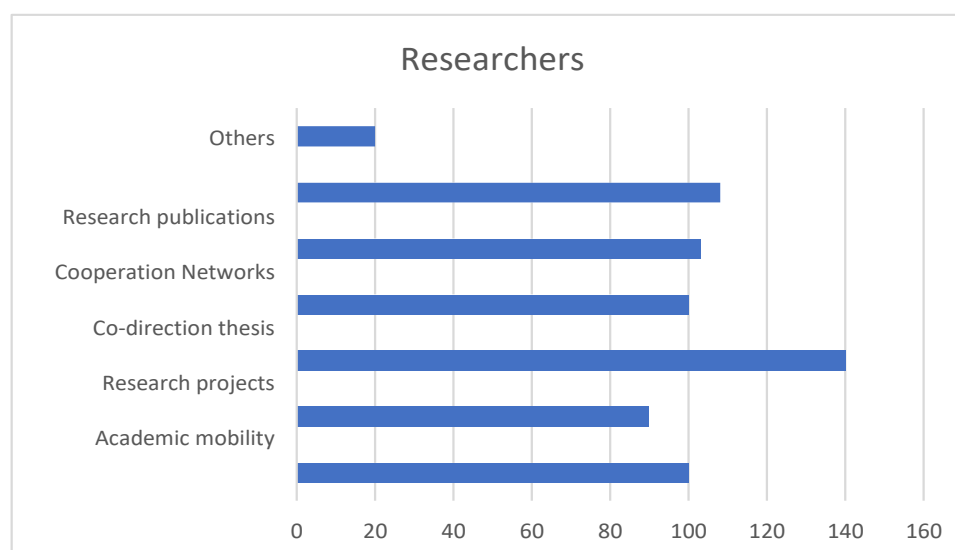
**Fig. 2:** People participation.



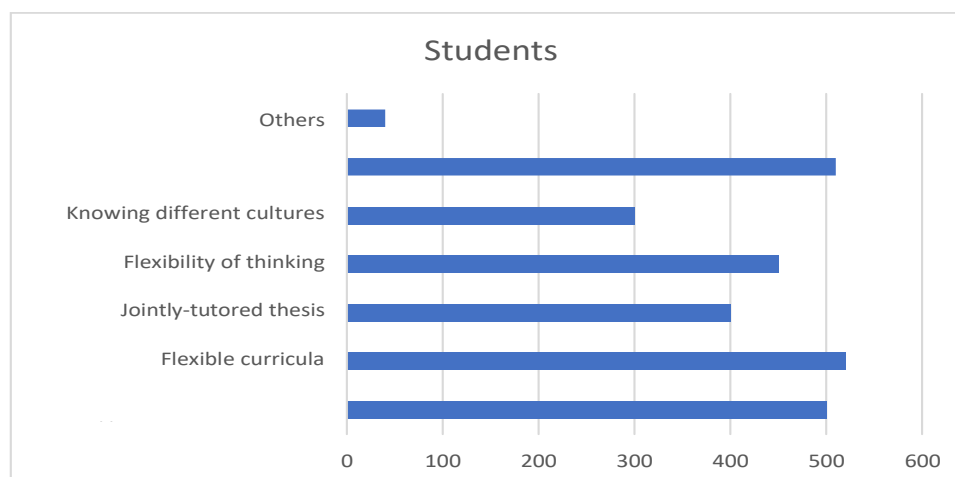
**Fig. 3:** Internationalisation importance perception.



**Fig.4:** Staff characteristics.



**Fig. 5:** Researchers characteristics.



**Fig. 6:** Students characteristics.

According to the survey, Internationalisation offer a great number of opportunities for different stakeholders of HEI's. For students, this aspect is crucial in their academic life, offering the opportunity to travel internationally via any exchange programs which may have been set up, and vice versa for students at partnered universities. Additionally, with the development of educational hubs, attracting international students from traditional regions of recruitment may become more difficult. Additionally, arguably the main reason for pursuing higher education is the preparation it affords for life in the working world. In the globalized society we live in, international collaboration programs help by providing students with the ability to study, work, and travel in an international capacity (Bell, 2004).

For researchers, Internationalisation offers a great opportunity to share experiences. As a result of the expansion of communication methods and the ease of international travel, academics and researchers are finding it easier than ever to collaborate with their foreign counterparts, making the exchange of academic ideas much simpler to organise. The ability to scrutinise, debate, and share experience is essential for academic and scientific accomplishment. Constructively challenging accepted opinions and ideas is central to their development, and international collaborations help to facilitate this. In terms of teaching, benefits include curriculum development and degrees formed in collaboration with partner institutions

HEI's can benefit from the Inter-American Organization For Higher Education (IOHE) both financially and academically. In the context of declining financial contributions of governments, international students are an additional funding opportunity. Moreover, internationalisation can improve HEI's reputation and the quality of education programmes because of increased international competition for the best students and academics. In addition, attracting international students is vital for many HEIs to survive, especially in countries where the population of young adults is expected to decline drastically in the coming decades (Breit, 2013).

Holding a central or key position in collaborative international research and innovation (R&I) networks is generally considered of vital importance for academic institutions. Among other things, being successful in such networks enables universities to secure research funds and acquire new resources and fresh ideas (Calignano, 2016).

Higher education is considered an essential component of the productive economy, how higher education is governed and managed has become a major policy issue. The quality of individual higher education institutions (HEI) and the system as a whole, (e.g. teaching and learning excellence, research and knowledge creation, commercialization and knowledge transfer, graduate employability and academic productivity), provide a good indication of a country's ability to compete successfully in the global economy. The rate of internationalization is growing rapidly, with unhindered communication channels and inexpensive travel.

Universities across the world are already seeking to make the most of the possibilities this presents by forming global partnerships and fostering relationships with other institutions. Those involved in regulation and governance in Higher Education and those who support the higher ideals of universities, such as promotion of capacity building, fair competition in the international marketplace for Higher Education, transparency and student choice, are all beginning to express an interest in the criteria underlying international rankings and a concern about their effects.

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## 5 Conclusions and Further Work

The internationalization of education also facilitates in engendering the "international characteristics" fostered in students that are desirable in a global economy such as international-mindedness and open mindedness, second language competence, flexibility of thinking, tolerance and respect for others (Hayden , 2003). This phenomenon also develops ethical commitment to allow students to examine their implicit and explicit beliefs and develop a sense of responsibility and civic engagement (Sulaiman, 2012)

Interest in university ranking in Japan occurs for two completely different reasons. The first is that a university ranking can influence a students' choice of university, especially at the undergraduate level. This is quite important because student selectivity acts as a major factor in student recruitment. The second is that a university ranking is considered to demonstrate a university's research capacity according to global standards. Having a high ranking can assist in attracting funds for research activities from the government, foundations and private enterprises, as well as attract talent from all over the world. To continue competing, universities should invest in cross-cultural university partnerships.

The survey has highlighted staff working relationships as the optimal means of forming connections, through meetings, exchanges, and academic events. Indeed, it was found that the relationship development only became more pragmatic once the initial connection had been formed, although good communication was still vital for success. Internationalisation allows an alliance of ideas and goals forming global partnerships and fostering relationships with other institutions.

Since higher education institutions are the essential actors in creating well-balanced and constructive internationalization strategies, they must advocate for policy change at the governmental level if the policies are driving internationalization in directions that might not serve long-term academic purposes. In this regard, the most important and on-going task for all higher education stakeholders remains the continuous examination and evaluation of the



effects of internationalization. It includes examining the impact of a more internationally open program, classroom, and institution on students and effects on creation of new knowledge influenced by exposure to scholars and researchers from other parts of the world. Furthermore, the internationalization of the higher education should not be just a mere paper agreement as the true essence of such collaborations requires execution in an environment which is favourable to the development of the international process by all means. In assessing the impacts that graduate from these institutes going to have on the society or community in which they live is also the duty of all higher education stake holders.

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