

Comparative Analysis of the Evaluation of Higher Education Institutions in Five Latin American Countries: Progress, Challenges and Perspectives

Bruno Wilfrido Soria De Mesa¹, José Alberto Crespo Jareño², Yonaiker Navas- Montes³, Sheila Janet Rangel Gómez⁴

Abstract

The assessment of higher education institutions in Latin America has a rich history that has evolved over several decades. The increasing collaboration among countries and the incorporation of international quality standards have contributed to the improvement of evaluation systems. However, challenges persist, such as adapting to the specific needs of each country and promoting quality in a context of limited resources. To conduct a comparative analysis of the evaluation of higher education institutions in the five Latin American countries (Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, Argentina, and Chile), a series of key aspects to be evaluated were identified: academic quality, research, internationalization, societal impact, administrative and financial management, and accreditation of academic programs. The comparative analysis of the evaluation of higher education institutions in Latin America reveals a diversity of approaches and challenges. The lack of official national rankings in most countries underscores the importance of global measurements in assessing academic quality. There is a need to adapt national standards and address quality gaps to ensure that universities in the region remain competitive at the international level.

Keywords: *Higher Education, Institutional Evaluation, Rankings, Latin America".*

Introduction

The evaluation of higher education institutions in Latin America has a rich history that has evolved over several decades. Although the practice of evaluating and ensuring the quality of higher education is not new, the formalization of institutional evaluation processes and systems in the region began to gain traction in the second half of the twentieth century. (Anisseh et al., 2023) (Zhidebekkyzy et al., 2023)

In the 1960s and 1970s, several Latin American countries, including Argentina, Chile, and Mexico, established bodies and agencies charged with monitoring and evaluating the quality of higher education institutions. According to these systems, they focused mainly on aspects such as the accreditation of academic programs and the evaluation of research

¹ Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia UNED-España, bsoria27@alumno.uned.es, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6230-403X>

² Profesor sociología de la Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha, josealberto.crespo@uclm.es, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2237-4049>

³ Universidad Estatal Península de Santa Elena, ynavas@upse.edu.ec, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9059-3879>

⁴ Universidad Estatal de Bolívar, srangel@ueb.edu.ec, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4476-8201>

and teaching. As the 20th century progressed, institutional evaluation expanded to address a wider range of aspects, including administrative management, linkage with society, and impact on regional development. (Ruiz-Toledo et al., 2022) War in the year 2020 (Irrázabal, 2021)

Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and other countries in the region introduced significant reforms in their higher education systems that incorporated institutional assessment as an essential component. (Martínez-Arellano, 2000)

According to the evaluation of higher education institutions in Latin America, it continues to be a crucial issue on the region's education agenda. Increasing collaboration between countries and the incorporation of international quality standards have contributed to the improvement of evaluation systems. However, challenges remain, such as adapting to country-specific needs and promoting quality in a context of limited resources. Kryvoruchko (Franco-Crespo et al., 2019)

The comparative analysis of institutional evaluation in the countries mentioned in this historical review is essential to understand the progress made and the ways to improve in the search for quality higher education in the region. The evaluation of higher education institutions is an ever-evolving field, influenced by the changing demands of society, the globalization of higher education, and trends in research and technology. . (Naidoo-Chetty & Marieta Du Plessis, 2021)

The evaluation of higher education institutions in Latin America has gained increasing relevance in recent decades, driven by the need to ensure the quality and effectiveness of education systems in the region. (J. O. Herrera et al., 2020)

Latin America is characterized by its diversity in terms of culture, economic and social development, and higher education systems, which has given rise to a wide range of evaluation approaches and methods. Understanding the advances, challenges and prospects in this area is essential to improve the quality of higher education in the region and ultimately contribute to sustainable development and the well-being of society. (P. C. Herrera et al., 2019) (Espinosa, 2016)

The evaluation of higher education institutions covers various aspects, from the quality of teaching and research to administrative management and contribution to society. According to López Leyva in 2016,

In recent years, several Latin American countries have implemented institutional evaluation systems to measure and improve the quality of their universities. (Vasen & Vilchis, 2017)

Our study aims to develop a comparative analysis of the evaluation of higher education institutions in five Latin American countries: Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, Argentina and Chile.

Methodology

To carry out the comparative analysis of the evaluation of higher education institutions in the five Latin American countries (Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, Argentina and Chile), a series of key aspects to be evaluated were identified. These aspects include, but are not limited to: academic quality, research, internationalization, impact on society, administrative and financial management, and accreditation of academic programs.

A thorough review of government documents, education legislation, accrediting agency reports, and other relevant resources was conducted from each of the countries included in the study. Data were also collected from national and international rankings of universities that evaluate and classify higher education institutions in Latin America.

These rankings included the QS World University Ranking and national rankings produced by each country's government agencies, as well as regional rankings.

Relevant data were also extracted, such as the positions of the universities in these rankings and the indicators used for the evaluation. Based on the results of the analysis, the progress made in the institutional evaluation in each country was identified, as well as the challenges they face and the prospects for improvement. Best practices and lessons learned from each country were highlighted.

Results

The results of our comparative analysis of the evaluation of higher education institutions in five Latin American countries (Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, Argentina and Chile) yield a series of significant findings, which are presented below:

Table 1. Assessment and Accreditation by country

Evaluation Aspect	Ecuador	Colombia	Peru	Argentina	Chile
Institutional Accreditation and Evaluation	CEAACES (now CACES) Quality Assurance Council that evaluates academic programs in Ecuador. SENESCYT oversees the system.	The Ministry of National Education, the CNA, and other bodies are responsible for accreditation.	SUNEDU is the entity in charge of accreditation and supervision.	CONEAU is the accrediting agency for academic programs in Argentina.	The CNA is responsible for accreditation.
University Rankings	Ecuador, there are no national university rankings of great relevance.	Colombia does not have an official university ranking system, but international rankings are used.	Peru does not have widely recognized national rankings, but international rankings are used.	Argentina does not have an official ranking system, but international rankings are used.	Chile uses the Ranking of Latin American Universities and other international rankings.
Entrance and Degree Exams	SER Baccalaureate exams and aptitude tests are used for the degree in Ecuador.	Colombia uses the Higher Education Quality State Exam (SABER PRO) to assess students, and the degree exam varies by institution.	Peru uses the Entrance Exam and the National Licensing Exam and SUNEDU to evaluate and supervise institutions.	Argentina does not have a standardized admission or degree test at the national level. Depends on the University	In Chile, it uses the PSU university selection test and the Bachelor's degree exam for the degree

Teacher Evaluation	The evaluation of teachers is carried out by higher education institutions in Ecuador.	Colombia has a teacher evaluation system that includes surveys of students and colleagues.	SUNEDU in Peru sets standards for teacher evaluation.	The evaluation of teachers varies according to the institutions in Argentina	In Chile, teacher evaluation is the responsibility of the institutions themselves.
--------------------	--	--	---	--	--

As we can see in Table 1, all the countries subject to analysis have an entity responsible for the accreditation evaluation processes at the Higher Education level, however, not all entities have the same hierarchical rank. Four of the five countries (Ecuador, Colombia, Peru and Argentina) do not have an official ranking. Chile does have an official ranking. All the countries under study use international rankings to a greater or lesser extent. All countries offer entrance exams and tests for the degree, however, in some cases these are standardized by the state and in other cases by the universities. In terms of teacher evaluation, only Peru has a responsible entity external to the Universities. In the rest of the countries, it depends directly on these

Table 2. National and international rankings by country

University Rankings	Ecuador	Colombia	Peru	Argentina	Chile
Relevant National Rankings	There are no national university rankings of great relevance in Ecuador.	Colombia does not have officially recognized national university rankings.	In Peru, there are no widely accepted national university rankings.	Argentina does not have widely recognized national university rankings.	Chile uses the Ranking of Latin American Universities (QS) and the Shanghai Ranking, among others.
QS World University Rankings	Some institutions in Ecuador may refer to the QS World University Rankings for international comparison.	In Colombia, the QS World University Rankings are one of the widely used international rankings.	In Peru, institutions can refer to the QS World University Rankings.	In Argentina, some universities use the QS World University Rankings to compare themselves globally.	The QS World University Rankings are widely recognized in Chile and used to evaluate international performance.
Times Higher Education World University Rankings	Some institutions may refer to this world ranking to assess their global position.	In Colombia, universities can use the Times Higher Education World University Rankings to compare themselves internationally.	In Peru, some institutions may refer to the Times Higher Education World University Rankings.	In Argentina, some universities may refer to this ranking for their global projection.	This ranking is considered in Chile to evaluate the international performance of institutions.

Although there are no official rankings in the countries under study, many of them adopt international rankings such as the QS World or the Times Higher Education World, but this depends exclusively on the Universities.

Table 3. QS World rankings by country considering the location of its top three universities

Country	University	QS University Ranking 2023	World Best Position
Ecuador	San Francisco de Quito (USFQ)	701	*
Ecuador	Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador	801	*
Ecuador	National Polytechnic School	1001	*
Colombia	Universidad de los Andes	220	**
Colombia	National University of Colombia	243	**
Colombia	Pontificia Universidad Javeriana	382	**
Peru	Pontifical Catholic University of Peru	363	**
Peru	Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia	651	*
Peru	Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos	801	*
Argentina	University of Buenos Aires (UBA)	67	
Argentina	Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina	323	**
Argentina	University of Palermo (UP)	390	**
Chile	Pontifical Catholic University of Chile (UC)	121	**
Chile	University of Chile	167	**
Chile	University of Santiago de Chile (USACH)	465	**

Note: *** (top 100 globally) **(101-500 globally) * (501 or higher globally)

As for the QS World Ranking by country, the top three positions by country were considered. The University of Buenos Aires is among the top 100 in the world, which allows Argentina to lead the standings. In second place is Chile. All of its best-positioned universities are located in the capital Santiago. In third place is Colombia, followed by Peru and Ecuador, respectively.

Discussion

The evaluation of higher education institutions is an issue of great relevance in Latin America, as it impacts the quality of education and, therefore, the development of the countries of the region. The comparative analysis of the evaluation and accreditation systems of Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, Argentina and Chile yields a series of interesting findings that reflect the diversity of approaches and challenges faced by the region in this area.

One of the key aspects analysed is institutional accreditation and assessment. Each country has its own entity in charge of this process, although it varies in terms of hierarchy and structure. Ecuador, for example, has CEAACES (now CACES), while Colombia has the Ministry of National Education and the CNA. Peru delegates this

responsibility to SUNEDU, and Argentina to CONEAU. Chile, in contrast, has consolidated its system under the CNA. These systems reflect the diversity of approaches and structures in the region to ensure the academic quality and relevance of higher education. Quality assurance processes have become central instruments of higher education policy, although there is still no universal consensus on how best to manage quality in higher education. According to Vincenzi, 1

The absence of national university rankings in four of the five countries (Ecuador, Colombia, Peru and Argentina) is an interesting finding. In these places, institutions turn to international rankings, such as the QS World University Ranking and the Times Higher Education World University Rankings, to assess their global standing. This may be due to the lack of an officially recognised national ranking system or the growing importance of global measurements in the context of the internationalisation of higher education (Orozco et al., 2015).

There are currently at least 10 rankings that compare universities on an international scale; these university comparisons, a little more than 10 years after their appearance, have gained the attention of a large number of actors in the field of higher education around the world.

Chile is an exception, as it has an official ranking, the Ranking of Latin American Universities, in addition to using international rankings. , According to Volter et al. in the year 2023) this strategy can offer a more complete view of the quality of Chilean institutions, but it also poses challenges in terms of adapting national standards to global measurements.

Although there are no official rankings in these countries, academic institutions use them to evaluate their performance and international projection. This reflects the growing importance of global competitiveness in the field of higher education and highlights the need to improve the quality and relevance of universities in the region (López-Leyva, 2020).

Table 3 presents the positions of the best universities in each country in the QS World University Ranking. Argentina stands out for having a university among the top 100 worldwide, which shows a high level of excellence in higher education in that country. Chile, with its universities located in Santiago, follows closely, suggesting a strong focus on the capital. Colombia, Peru and Ecuador occupy lower positions, which could indicate the need to improve the quality of their institutions (Adeyemo, 2023).

A significant contribution of our research reveals that the best-ranked universities are located in the capitals of each country. This clearly indicates the level of concentration in terms of resources and infrastructure that capitals normally have, in this case the higher education system is no exception (Payne & Roberts, 2010).

The comparative analysis of the evaluation of higher education institutions in Latin America reveals a diversity of approaches and challenges in the region. The lack of official national rankings in most countries underscores the importance of global measurements in assessing academic quality. However, this raises the need to adapt national standards and address quality gaps to ensure that universities in the region remain internationally competitive.

Conclusions

The evaluation of higher education institutions in Latin America is of utmost importance, as it directly influences the quality of education and, consequently, the development of the countries of the region.

Comparative analysis of the evaluation and accreditation systems of Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, Argentina and Chile reveals interesting findings that reflect the diversity of approaches and challenges facing the region. Each country has its own entity in charge of this process, with differences in terms of hierarchy and structure.

These systems reflect the diversity of approaches and structures in the region to ensure the academic quality and relevance of higher education. Quality assurance processes have become central instruments in higher education policy, although there is still no universal consensus on how best to manage quality in higher education.

The growing number of international university rankings in the last decade has attracted attention in the field of higher education globally. These rankings have become essential tools for institutions to assess their performance and international standing.

The comparative analysis of the evaluation of higher education institutions in Latin America reveals a diversity of approaches and challenges in the region. The absence of official national university rankings in most countries underscores the importance of global measurements in assessing academic quality. However, it also highlights the need to adapt national standards and address quality gaps to ensure that universities in the region remain internationally competitive.

References

- Adeyemo, K. S. (2023). QS World University Rankings' Metrics Analysis. In *Rhetoric of the Asia Higher Education Rankings*. Brill. <https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004543379>
- Anisseh, M., Sharifi, N., & Akbari, Z. (2023). Evaluation of universities service quality through Servqual method. *Journal of Engineering Management and Competitiveness (JEMC)*, 13(1), 3–10. <https://doi.org/10.5937/JEMC2301003A>
- Espinosa, E. M. (2016). An interesting perspective on the social commitment of higher education. *Journal of Higher Education*, 45(177), 177–182. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.RESU.2016.04.006>
- Franco-Crespo, A., Ramos, V., Herrera, F., & Chávez, H. (2019). THE CHALLENGES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA TOWARDS THE KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY. *EDULEARN19 Proceedings*, 1, 10013–10022. <https://doi.org/10.21125/EDULEARN.2019.2505>
- Guerra, J., Ortiz-Rojas, M., Zúñiga-Prieto, M. A., Scheihing, E., Jiménez, A., Broos, T., De Laet, T., & Verbert, K. (2020). Adaptation and evaluation of a learning analytics dashboard to improve academic support at three Latin American universities. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 51(4), 973–1001. <https://doi.org/10.1111/BJET.12950>
- Herrera, J. O., Cadena-Vela, S., Padilla-Verdugo, R., Gualli, T., & García-Serrano, I. (2020). A Culture of Quality in Higher Education. <https://doi.org/10.18687/LACCEI2020.1.1.364>
- Herrera, P. C., Dreifuss-Serrano, C., & Arroyo, M. C. (2019). Latin American universities and digital craft: Reaching out to regional development. *SHIRCON 2019 - 2019 IEEE Sciences and Humanities International Research Conference*. <https://doi.org/10.1109/SHIRCON48091.2019.9024888>
- Irarrázabal, C. C. (2021). Analysis of the Environment in University Management: An Approach from the Theory of Social Systems. *Research News in Education*, 21(1), 1–21. <https://doi.org/10.15517/AIE.V21I1.44075>
- Kryvoruchko, V., & Kryvoruchko, V. (2022). Analysis of rating systems for evaluation of competitiveness of higher education institutions. *Ekonomichnyy Analiz*, 32(1), 47–57. <https://doi.org/10.35774/econa2022.01.047>
- López Leyva, S. (2016). Competitiveness of Higher Education in Four Latin American Countries: A Perspective from a World Ranking. *Journal of Higher Education*, 45(178), 45–59. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.RESU.2016.02.003>

- López-Leyva, S. (2020). Strengths and weaknesses of Latin American higher education for global competitiveness. *University Education*, 13(5), 165–176. <https://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-50062020000500165>
- Martínez-Arellano, F. F. (2000). Library Science Education in Mexico. *Journal of Education for Library and Information Science*, 41(2), 147. <https://doi.org/10.2307/40324062>
- Naidoo-Chetty, M., & Marieta Du Plessis, &. (2021). Systematic Review of the Job Demands and Resources of Academic Staff within Higher Education Institutions. *International Journal of Higher Education*, 10(3), 268. <https://doi.org/10.5430/IJHE.V10N3P268>
- Orozco, J. E. F., Becerra, J. I. V., & Arellano, C. I. M. (2015). Current perspectives on world university rankings. *Journal of Higher Education*, 44(175), 41–67. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.RESU.2015.09.001>
- Payne, A. A., & Roberts, J. (2010). Government Oversight of Public Universities: Are Centralized Performance Schemes Related to Increased Quantity or Quality? *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 92(1), 207–212. <https://doi.org/10.1162/REST.2009.10157>
- Ruiz-Toledo, M., Ruff-Escobar, C., Benites, L., González, J. A., & Galindo-Villardón, M. P. (2022). The Place of Latin American Universities in International University Rankings. A Multivariate Statistical Analysis. *Smart Innovation, Systems and Technologies*, 256, 163–181. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-16-5063-5_14/COVER
- Vasen, F., & Vilchis, I. L. (2017). National Classification Systems for Scientific Journals in Latin America: Recent Trends and Implications for Academic Evaluation in the Social Sciences. *Mexican Journal of Political and Social Sciences*, 62(231), 199–228. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0185-1918\(17\)30043-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0185-1918(17)30043-0)
- Vincenzi, A. H. de. (2013). Institutional evaluation and improvement of educational quality in universities. *Ibero-American Journal of Higher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.22201/IISUE.20072872E.2013.9.85>
- Volter, C., Pesántez, B., Mena Reinoso, A. P., Rodríguez Vinuesa, V. I., Aníbal, R., & Alipio, L. (2023). CHARACTERIZATION OF LATIN AMERICAN UNIVERSITIES IN THE TOP10 OF THE QS WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS 2021 ACCORDING TO THE METRICS FOR THE PERIOD 2018 – 2021. *Russian Law Journal*, 11(7f). <https://doi.org/10.52783/RLJ.V11I7S.1444>
- Zhidebekkyzy, A., Minazheva, G., Temerbulatova, Z., & Kalmakova, D. (2023). Evaluation of Research Performance at Universities: A Comprehensive Methodological Approach. *International Journal of Emerging Technologies in Learning (IJET)*, 18(06), 110–129. <https://doi.org/10.3991/IJET.V18I06.36733>