



Review Article

Internationalization in higher education: Practices and processes of change between Ecuador and the Netherlands

Jennifer Sobeida Moreira-Choez^{a,b,*}, Graciela Josefina Castro-Castillo^{c,†}, Carmen Liliana Mera-Plaza^{d,†},
María Cristina Arias-Iturralde^{e,†}

^a Department of Didactics, Faculty of Philosophy, Literature, and Education Sciences, Department of Mathematics and Statistics, Faculty of Basic Sciences, Technical University of Manabí, Manabí 130101, Ecuador

^b Graduate School, State University of Milagro, Guayas 091701, Ecuador

^c Degree in Educational Sciences, Faculty of Education, State University of Milagro, Guayas 091701, Ecuador

^d Advanced Technology Program in Taxation, Paulo Emilio Macías Higher Technological Institute, Portoviejo 130101, Ecuador

^e Professionalization program for basic education and bilingual intercultural education teaching careers, National University of Education, Canar 030102, Ecuador

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Abstract

In a globalized context where internationalization of higher education has become a key strategy for Higher Education Institutions, this article presents a comparative study of the internationalization processes of Ecuador and the Netherlands. Despite the advantages offered by internationalization, there are limitations and challenges related to quality, curriculum, management, culture, language, as well as bureaucratic and administrative processes, especially in countries with different educational and cultural systems. The objective of the study was to identify and compare the internationalization processes of Ecuador and the Netherlands, using a methodology based on bibliographic and documentary techniques, as well as the constant comparative method. The comparative analysis identified several thematic categories, including paradigmatic change, divergence in structural and financial transformation, commitment to the expansion of international educational activities, circumstantial analysis of restrictive aspects, emerging educational project, university autonomy as an element of independence, study opportunities, pursuit of excellence, and ethnological manifestations. Based on the results obtained, it is concluded that both countries have similar educational and cultural systems, although with some differences, which allows for a direct comparison and the identification of shared best practices and challenges in the internationalization processes of higher education.

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* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: jennifer.moreira@utm.edu.ec; jmoreirac10@unemi.edu.ec (J. S. Moreira-Choez).

† Co-first authors.

E-mail address: gcastroc4@unemi.edu.ec (G. J. Castro-Castillo).

E-mail address: carmen.mera@itspem.edu.ec (C. L. Mera-Plaza).

E-mail address: maria.cris.arias@hotmail.com (M. C. Arias-Iturralde).

Introduction

Internationalization plays a paramount role in shaping the landscape of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the 21st century (Altbach & Knight, 2007). According to Villavicencio (2019), it is characterized as a cross-cutting process, involving various stakeholders from the academic community, with the objective of integrating significant functions to project into international and intercultural arenas. Echoing this sentiment, Curaj et al. (2020) posit that internationalization is the process of integrating the international/intercultural dimension into the institution's teaching, research, and service.

From an organizational approach, Wit and Altbach (2021) argue that internationalization fosters innovation, but it must be carried out considering key elements such as strategic planning and cultural context. As a result, HEIs must develop strategies and institutional plans to ensure educational quality, guarantee accreditation, obtain financing, and execute pertinent policies prior to human talent formation. This process leads to the assumption of their social responsibility.

The process of internationalization in HEIs carries multiple benefits, among which include student mobility, international cooperation agreements, curriculum internationalization, and the formation of research groups. These are areas that can generate a significant impact on the development and growth of such institutions. However, despite the evident benefits, the path towards internationalization also presents various challenges.

A relevant challenge is the socioeconomic and cultural asymmetry that can arise in the context of globalized education. Additionally, the bureaucratic administrative processes necessary to obtain financing can become barriers that hinder progress towards greater internationalization. Likewise, the implications associated with immigration issues that can complicate the process must be considered.

Another notable limitation is related to the lack of commitment, planning, and inexperience on the part of the HEIs and some governments. This scenario is exacerbated by the deficient integration of curricular structures and difficulties in accreditation, factors that can significantly slow down internationalization efforts (Jesús, 2019; Zamora, 2022).

Comparing Ecuador and the Netherlands in the context of higher education internationalization offers valuable insights due to their distinct characteristics and circumstances.

Firstly, these two countries present contrasting backgrounds in terms of their economic development. Ecuador, as a developing country, experiences challenges that may impact its education system, such as economic instability, underfunded institutions, and lack of access to higher education in rural areas. By comparison, the

Netherlands, as a developed country, has a well-established and globally recognized higher education system.

This comparison could lead to several meaningful conclusions. For instance, it can help identify effective internationalization strategies implemented in the Netherlands that could be adapted and implemented in Ecuador. It could also illuminate the unique challenges faced by Ecuador in its quest to internationalize its education system and propose solutions drawn from the Netherlands' experiences.

Additionally, comparing these two countries can offer new perspectives on the relationship between economic development and education. It could provide a deeper understanding of how internationalization in higher education can contribute to a country's development and vice versa.

In terms of cultural diversity, Ecuador, being in South America, and the Netherlands, in Europe, represent different cultural spheres. Observing how these cultural differences affect the internationalization process of higher education could lead to a more comprehensive understanding of this process in different world regions.

The Netherlands has adopted a highly developed and systematic approach to internationalization, backed by strong governmental support and a series of national and regional initiatives, which has allowed its universities to position themselves among the best globally. Examining this model, its implementation methods, and its results can provide Ecuador with valuable information to develop and implement more effective internationalization policies.

This is where a gap in the existing literature is evident, as there are few studies that comparatively analyze the process of internationalization of higher education in countries with such contrasting profiles as Ecuador and the Netherlands. Therefore, the comparative study of these two countries is justified by the possibility of learning from the experiences and internationalization strategies of the Netherlands, and applying these lessons in a contextually relevant manner in Ecuador.

This study is of utmost importance since, by filling this gap, it will provide a framework to strengthen the ability of Ecuadorian HEIs to internationalize effectively and sustainably. This will result in a benefit for their academic community and society in general, facilitating the exchange of knowledge, promoting international collaboration, and encouraging intercultural understanding and respect.

Within this framework, the present study arises with the purpose of comparing the internationalization processes of Higher Education between Ecuador and the Netherlands. To achieve this objective, a comparative approach of a multidisciplinary and qualitative nature has been adopted. This methodology will provide a solid framework for understanding the similarities and differences between the approaches and challenges that these two countries have experienced in their respective internationalization processes.

Methodology

In this study, a methodological design based on comparative analysis was adopted to examine the internationalization processes of higher education in Ecuador and the Netherlands. Bibliographic and documentary techniques were applied to perform a detailed and systematic examination of a selection of research papers and scientific articles, thus forming a corpus of relevant documents for the study.

The main analysis method used was the constant comparative method proposed. This method, recognized for its effectiveness in identifying similarities and differences between categories and subcategories that emerge from the data, facilitated the identification of common aspects and differences in the internationalization processes in the two contexts studied.

The structure of the study was organized in different stages. In the first stage, aspects related to the historical and political context of each country were addressed, and the characteristics of the university systems were described from dimensions such as Governance, Financing, Admission, Teaching Methodology, Duration, Degree Granting, and Academic Offerings. This analysis allowed the characterization of the way their higher education systems are organized.

Subsequently, the internationalization strategies promoted by the Netherlands and Ecuador were investigated, as well as their problems and limitations. The findings were summarized in a comparative table, facilitating the identification of convergences and divergences.

In addition, a detailed analysis of the content from several dimensions was performed, including the Socio-historical context, Economic development, Curriculum, Management, Scope, Quality standards, and Culture. Through this multidimensional analysis, the most outstanding categories were identified, and relationships and divergences were established, using the exegetical analysis allowed by the comparative method.

Literature Review

Historical-political context of the Netherlands: From County to Low Countries

According to Pérez-Bustamante (2006), the Netherlands has a long history dating back to 1304 when it was documented as a County. It is currently part of the Low Countries, which consists of 12 provinces located in

northeastern Europe. The country borders the North Sea to the north and west, Belgium to the south, and Germany to the east. The official name of the country is the Kingdom of the Netherlands, and it has a population of 17,193,499 inhabitants with Amsterdam as its capital and The Hague as its government seat. The Netherlands has a parliamentary monarchy government structure with two chambers - the States General and the government, and the monarch does not preside over the government (Van, 2010).

The Netherlands has a culture oriented towards heterogeneity and consensus despite being demographically and economically homogeneous. The country has various religions and socio-economic classes coexisting, and discrimination is prohibited. The citizens lead an ethical and protocol lifestyle, and they are correct, respectful of laws, punctual, polite, and productive (Leun, 2003; Wagenaar et al., 2013). Education is highly valued, with a high level of student participation and a large number of people graduating from HEIs. The country has freedom of worship and uses the euro as its legal currency.

Ecuador: From Colony to Republic

Ecuador, located in South America, was conquered by the Spanish after the arrival of Christopher Columbus, subjecting its Indigenous population to the colonial state and Catholic religion (Herzog, 2013). After the Campaigns of the South led by Simón Bolívar and Antonio José de Sucre, Ecuador became a free and independent state, but it faced political and economic setbacks with capitalist dominance in the 1990s (Selcuk, 2019). In 2007, Rafael Correa won the presidential elections and established a Constituent Assembly to reform the constitution and modify main institutions, including the accreditation and evaluation of HEIs (Benavides et al., 2019; Ellner, 2011).

Culturally, Ecuadorians have patriotic values and respect democratic norms of popular participation and social cohesion. They are reliable, fighters, cautious, patriots, joyful, hardworking, and have a strong sense of belonging to their own autochthonous culture (Poveda & Gómez, 2019). The society is pluricultural, solidary, respectful, and inclusive, with mestizos as the predominant race, and the majority belonging to the middle and lower social strata, with only 13 percent completing higher education studies.

Characteristics of the university system:

The WO and HBO systems in the Netherlands

The Netherlands is a member of the European Union, a system created in 1950 to make economic, political, cultural, and educational agreements among its member

nations, which are governed by a Council and its ministers with the support of multinational groups of experts (Borras-Alomar et al., 1994; Štiks, 2017). As part of its commitment to educational reforms, the Netherlands signed the Bologna Declaration along with 28 other countries, leading to some adaptations in the Dutch higher education system while maintaining its innovative status (Komotar, 2018; Neave, 2009).

In the Netherlands, there are three types of higher education institutions: public institutions, approved institutions, and private institutions, which offer two options: Research Universities (WO) and Universities of Applied Sciences (HBO) (Altbach, 2004). Public institutions are financed by the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science or the Ministry of Economy, Agriculture, and Innovation, while approved institutions do not receive government funding, and private institutions are not governed by government regulations.

Transformations in Higher Education Institutions in Ecuador

Before 2008, higher education in Ecuador was lacking in attention and adequate social responsibility to meet the learning needs of the country (Geva-May et al., 2020). However, with the arrival of the Citizen Revolution and the new constitution, institutions such as CONEA, CES, CEAACES, and SENESCYT were established to

improve and reconfigure the system, leading to significant transformations such as university autonomy, free education, and special attention to quality (Albornoz, 2020).

The Higher Education Law (Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior LOES, 2018) provides for the organization of universities, polytechnic schools, and technical and technological institutes, with technical or technologist degrees having a duration of 2 to 3 years and Licentiate or other professions such as engineering having a minimum career duration of 4 years. Postgraduate studies, including diploma, superior, specialist, master, and doctorate degrees, take 6 months, 1, 2, and 4 years, respectively (Frank et al., 2014). The changes brought about by these institutions have resulted in a more heterogeneous and humanistic vision of higher education in Ecuador.

However, to summarize the information, the following table presents the characterization of the university systems of the Netherlands and Ecuador, in order to reflect from the dimensions of Governance, Financing, Admission, Teaching Methodology, Duration, Degree and Academic Offer, the ways in which they organize their higher education systems (See [Table 1](#)).

The comparative analysis of the higher education system in the Netherlands and Ecuador exposes substantial differences in terms of institutional governance, funding, admission, teaching methodology, and degrees.

Table 1 Characterization of the university system in the Netherlands and Ecuador

Dimensions	Netherlands	Ecuador	Authors and Key Categories
Institutional Governance	The institutional governance structure is imposed by the executive board (composed of the president, vice president, and rector), whose appointment is given by the supervisory board, which in turn is elected by the government. These members are external to the university. In addition, the deans are appointed by the executive board.	SENESCYT has the direction of public policy in higher education, but university governance is composed of individual bodies (rector, academic vice-rector, and administrative vice-rector) and collegial bodies, which are the highest authority in the university.	(Donina & Hasanefendic, 2019; Villalobos et al., 2017) University Governance
Funding	Public, non-governmental, and private	Assumed by the State	(Gachet et al., 2019; Hoogesteger, 2013)- University Funding
Admission	Admission process in (WO), where it is necessary to obtain a secondary education diploma. In (HBO), a general basic education and secondary education diploma must be obtained. Therefore, it will depend on the previous education received.	The student's average and the results of the Ser Bachiller test are taken into account	(Cisneros et al., 2021; Kurysheva et al., 2019)- University Admission Process
Teaching Methodology	The system is binary. It combines learning and teaching with the productive sphere.	Traditional	(Kopnina, 2018; Tejedor et al., 2021) - University Teaching Methodology
Degree	WO: Master's degree, of a more academic nature; HBO: Bachelor's and Master's degrees with a labor focus.	It is estimated that the degrees awarded by polytechnic schools correspond to professional degrees in basic and applied sciences and universities grant bachelor's degrees.	(Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior (LOES), 2018) - University Degrees

In terms of institutional governance, the Netherlands adopts a hierarchical approach, where an external executive board assigns key roles, including the deans, suggesting a top-down model (Donina & Hasanefendic, 2019). This system contrasts with Ecuador's model, where university governance is more decentralized, granting individual and collegial bodies the highest authority in the university. Here, SENESCYT sets public policy for higher education but seems to allow greater institutional autonomy (Villalobos et al., 2017).

Regarding funding, the Dutch system appears more diversified with a combination of public, non-governmental, and private funds, which could allow more financial flexibility and resilience (Gachet et al., 2019). In contrast, funding in Ecuador is entirely assumed by the state, which could generate dependency and limit the financial autonomy of the institutions (Hoogesteger, 2013).

The admission process in the Netherlands depends on the type of institution and the level of previous education, which could reflect a more stratified higher education structure (Cisneros et al., 2021). Meanwhile, in Ecuador, admission is based on academic performance and the results of a standardized test, which could promote equity by leveling the playing field for applicants, although some might argue it also limits diversity and inclusion (Kuryшева et al., 2019).

In terms of teaching methodology, the Dutch system, which combines teaching and learning with the productive sphere, may encourage integration between education and the labor sector (Kopnina, 2018). Ecuador, on the other hand, follows a more traditional approach, although the precise definition of “traditional” is not specified and could be subject to further analysis (Tejedor et al., 2021).

Finally, regarding the degrees granted, both the Netherlands and Ecuador offer degrees with varied focuses, either academic or professional. In the Netherlands, the degrees vary according to the type of institution, while in Ecuador, the degrees differ according to the nature of the institution (polytechnic schools vs. universities) (Ley Orgánica de Educación Superior (LOES), 2018). This latter approach could allow greater diversification and specialization of higher education institutions but could also contribute to stratification in the education system.

Internationalization efforts in the higher education systems of the Netherlands and Ecuador

In the Netherlands, 91 percent of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have specific internationalization

plans aimed at developing intercultural competencies in students. According to Beerkens (2023), these plans focus on attention, effectiveness, foreign language learning, flexibility, and innovation based on international standards, with the goal of preparing students for their professional and general knowledge development. The Dutch government supports internationalization through quality study programs. Additionally, the Netherlands participates in the European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students, ERASMUS, which provides funding for exchanges between participants, including scholarship opportunities.

Ecuador, on the other hand, is a member of the International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC), a UNESCO-affiliated international institution that promotes internationalization. According to Barreto and Garrido (2021), Ecuador has formal institutionalized agreements with countries such as Spain, the United Kingdom, Canada, Chile, the Netherlands, China, and Russia to promote relationships and the development of programs, including scholarships and mobility, related to teaching, culture, and research.

Moreover, Ecuador established the Prometeo program in 2010, aimed at strengthening academic and scientific research capacities of teachers in universities and public institutions, and promoting the formation of international networks (Pérez-Bustamante et al., 2016). Ecuador has also signed bilateral agreements with over 200 organizations worldwide for mutual recognition of academic degrees, and has increased the granting of fourth-level scholarships to study abroad. In 2017, Ecuador created the agenda 2035, whose primary objective is to promote global research and technological development (Díaz-Bedoya & Ortíz-Díaz, 2020; Icaza et al., 2022).

Problems and limitations of internationalization in the countries involved in the study.

In the Netherlands, problems related to internationalization seem to be more linked to external aspects such as accommodation, validation, and procedures by the student's country of origin, as well as the language used in classes, which are generally taught in English. Breetvelt (2018) points out that the risk of anglicization may lead to the loss of the essence of the native language, which is Dutch.

In Ecuador, the lack of budget allocation has been a constant, despite the State's attempts to change this reality. In addition, although there are plans and programs

for the development of internationalization, few activities are carried out or formally registered in statistics. The language barrier and high costs of scientific publications in academic and international journals are also mentioned (Barreto & Garrido, 2021).

The limited offer of postgraduate programs for doctoral studies in Ecuador is another significant limitation, which causes brain drain to other countries (Biglari et al., 2022) such as Argentina, the United States, Chile, Spain, Peru, Colombia, the United Kingdom, and Cuba (Knobel et al., 2013).

Lastly, in both countries, there is some confusion between mobility and internationalization. Tran and Marginson (2018) point out that although both concepts are related, mobility is a strategy to intensify and expand internationalization, but internationalization is carried out in an institutionalized manner.

Search Criteria

This study adopts a rigorous approach for the search, selection, and review of the main sources of literature pertaining to the historical-political contexts of Ecuador and the Netherlands. This approach is developed based on several key criteria to ensure that the literature review is relevant, comprehensive, and accurate.

Beginning with the search strategy, we identify academic and official sources that provide detailed and valid information about the history, politics, and higher education in both countries. Sources that offer a comprehensive and well-founded vision of the internationalization processes in higher education

in Ecuador and the Netherlands are prioritized. The literature search extends to various academic databases, as well as official documents and publications from relevant organizations.

For the selection of sources, we adhere to stringent criteria that guarantee the relevance, authenticity, and accuracy of the information obtained. Preference is given to recent publications and studies conducted by recognized researchers or institutions in the fields of education and international politics. Additionally, sources that offer critical and reflective perspectives on the internationalization processes in both contexts are valued.

Regarding the review of sources, a critical analysis of each selected source is carried out to evaluate its quality and contribution to understanding the internationalization processes in the educational contexts of Ecuador and the Netherlands. The robustness of the arguments presented, the consistency and coherence of the ideas, as well as the general contribution to the existing literature are considered.

Results and Discussion

The following table is a comparison of the studied countries from the dimensions: Socio-historical context, Economic development, Curriculum, Management, Scope, Quality standards, and Culture, in which a summary of the interpretive comparison is expressed, where emerging categories arise that summarize the findings in a reduced manner (See [Table 2](#)).

Table 2 Emerging categories from the compared dimensions.

Dimensions	Netherlands	Ecuador	Emerging Categories	Authors
Socio-Historical Context	Belongs to a union of colonizing and monarchic countries	Formerly a colonized country that fought for its independence	Paradigmatic Change	(Martínez Novo, 2018; Poudel et al., 2014)
Economic Development	Its industrial activity is wide in chemical refining, electrical machinery manufacturing, and food processing	Agriculture and later oil-based. Its economy has diversified little after dollarization	Divergence of Financial Structural Transformation	(de Jong & Jungmeier, 2015; Grilli, 2005)
Internationalization Processes	Government policies and structured plans that are executed	Membership in international organizations, transformation of laws, creation of institutions, Agenda 2035	Commitment to Expanding International Educational Activities	(Moreira Mero et al., 2020; Verbeek & van der Vleuten, 2008; Watson, 1991)
Curriculum	Competency-Based Approach	Humanistic Approach	Emergent Educational Project	
Quality	It is achieved through prior certification audit	It is achieved through prior accreditation and evaluation carried out by CONEA	Pursuit of Excellence	
Culture	Protocolary, polite, and productive	Traditional with leftist tendencies	Ethnological Manifestations	

Based on the evidence presented in [Table 2](#), it is clear that the socio-historical contexts of the Netherlands and Ecuador significantly contribute to their respective processes of educational internationalization. The Netherlands, with its history of colonization and monarchic rule, starkly contrasts with Ecuador, a country that had to fight for its independence from colonial rule and now operates as a republic (Valencia, 2011). The repercussions of this paradigm shift in Ecuador are still palpable, influencing its drive for educational development and independence.

Economic disparities between the two nations are another key factor shaping their internationalization strategies. The Netherlands boasts a well-developed economy with extensive industrial activity, which includes chemical refining, electric machinery manufacturing, and food processing (Ignatiev & Tsyra, 2022). Ecuador, on the other hand, still heavily relies on its agricultural and oil sectors, with limited economic diversification following the country's dollarization (de la Torre et al., 2020; Marí Del Cristo & Gómez-Puig, 2016). This divergence in economic development naturally impacts the financial underpinnings of their respective education systems.

Analyzing their internationalization processes reveals that both the Netherlands and Ecuador demonstrate a commitment to expanding international educational activities, which represents an invaluable opportunity for the academic and professional development of their students. However, both nations share challenges and limitations, such as financial issues, cultural differences, and language barriers. A careful examination of these limitations is necessary to overcome them and advance in the internationalization of education (Dewey & Duff, 2009).

In terms of curricular focus, the competency-based approach of the Netherlands promotes practical skills, critical thinking, and collaboration, preparing students for the world of work (Adedeji & Campbell, 2013; Mulder, 2014). In contrast, Ecuador's humanistic curriculum emphasizes citizenship, ethical values, and social responsibility, aiming to develop empathetic and tolerant individuals who can engage critically with social issues (Martínez Novo & de la Torre, 2010).

Both nations manifest their commitment to education through emerging projects and reforms. The Netherlands emphasizes innovation and experimentation with new teaching models (Evers et al., 2002), while Ecuador, through its Agenda 2035, aims to improve the quality and access to education, regardless of socio-economic background (Gutiérrez et al., 2019).

In management, both the Netherlands and Ecuador value autonomy and decision-making. However, their models differ: The Netherlands favors a collaborative approach (Barrón et al., 2010), whereas Ecuador employs a more business-like managerial model (Bouhey & McKenna, 2021). University autonomy, which ensures the freedom of institutions to make independent decisions, is championed by both nations as key to maintaining the quality and relevance of their education.

Considering the quality and scope of education, the Netherlands have stricter admission processes and higher costs, which could limit access (Jongbloed, 2003). Ecuador's constitutionally guaranteed education opens broader access but needs to ensure quality through rigorous accreditation and evaluation by CONEA (Gutiérrez et al., 2023; Saavedra, 2012).

The results of comparing these educational dimensions lead to several emerging categories that facilitate a more nuanced understanding of internationalization processes in both countries. Key among these are paradigm change, divergence in financial structural transformation, commitment to expanding international educational activities, circumstantial analysis of restrictive aspects, and the quest for excellence (Dobbins & Knill, 2009). As such, despite their differences, both nations strive to improve their education systems and provide their students with the best possible opportunities.

Despite these challenges, opportunities for improvement are plentiful. In the Netherlands, the creation of student residencies could boost the real estate sector, and the implementation of English courses and cultural education could mitigate cultural clashes. In Ecuador, the development of innovative and competitive curricula and securing adequate funding are critical steps in attracting international students and executing the established plans.

A critical examination of the historical-political context of both Ecuador and the Netherlands in relation to the internationalization of higher education can yield crucial insights. These insights allow for a more robust understanding of the successes, challenges, and potential future trajectories of higher education internationalization in these nations.

In the case of Ecuador, its historical-political context is marked by periods of political instability, economic crises, and social inequality, all of which have significant implications for its higher education system. As noted by authors such as Vanegas López et al. (2017), these factors have impacted the capacity for Ecuador to fully engage with internationalization processes. For instance, financial constraints and political volatility can hinder the establishment of consistent and effective internationalization policies.

Moreover, despite significant advances in recent years, such as the creation of the Plan Ecuador Maestro aimed at improving education quality and international cooperation (Rieckmann et al., 2021), the nation still faces significant challenges.

Contrastingly, the Netherlands presents a considerably different historical-political landscape. The country has a long-standing tradition of open and inclusive higher education policies, underpinned by political stability and robust economic performance. The Dutch approach to the internationalization of higher education is widely recognized for its success and has been discussed in numerous studies (Kickert, 1995). Key elements include robust funding for student and staff mobility, promotion of international research collaborations, and the extensive use of English as a medium of instruction, among others.

The comparison between the two countries underscores the influence of historical-political factors on higher education internationalization. It shows that political stability, economic prosperity, and inclusive policies, as seen in the Netherlands, can significantly promote internationalization efforts. Conversely, in the context of countries like Ecuador, political and economic challenges may limit the advancement of such initiatives.

However, it's important to note that these are not deterministic relations and, as argued by Pashby and de Oliveira (2016), different countries can deploy varied strategies to navigate their specific contexts and achieve meaningful progress in higher education internationalization. Therefore, analyzing both the challenges and the opportunities within each country's historical-political context allows for a more nuanced understanding of their unique pathways towards internationalization.

Conclusion

The study's findings underline that internationalization is a multifaceted process, exhibiting marked disparities between countries as exemplified by the Netherlands and Ecuador. Dutch universities have established themselves as leaders in STEM fields, attracting 1.4 percent of the global student body, credited to a wide range of comprehensive academic programs. Conversely, Ecuador, grappling with economic constraints, limited English-taught programs, and systemic educational issues like the quality of teaching and infrastructural deficiencies, struggles to attract a comparable international student population. These discrepancies underscore the need for tailored strategies to address unique challenges while propelling internationalization efforts in both nations.

For the Netherlands, while its position is commendable, there's room for further growth. By fostering collaborative networks with global universities and implementing additional student exchange programs, it can enhance its international educational influence.

Ecuador, on the other hand, requires a different approach. Investment in elevating the quality of education, enhancing school infrastructure, and promoting its rich cultural heritage can make it more appealing to international students. These measures can also address systemic issues, thereby improving the overall education landscape in the country.

However, the internationalization of higher education is not a solitary endeavor of universities or students alone. It's a collective responsibility that calls for the involvement of governments, businesses, and other stakeholders. Their concerted efforts can amplify the positive impact of internationalization on the development and success of higher education institutions, and also on broader socio-economic advancement.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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