



MASTER THESIS ASSESSMENT REPORT

Assessment type: Master thesis review

Author of thesis: Gabriela Alexandra Galarza Moreano

Title of thesis: Internationalization of Higher Education in Ecuador

Author of assessment: Mgr. Jan Kohoutek, PhD.

The thesis submitted deals with internationalization of higher education (HE) in Ecuador, which is a rarely researched and pertinent theme falling into the public policy field. The thesis has a clear and fitting structure, including the explicit theoretical, methodological, contextual, empirical and discussion parts. The thesis starts from *the assumption of HE internationalization as a neglected policy domain by the Ecuadorian state authorities* and proceeds to set four corresponding research questions (p. 18). The overall goal is to identify advantages and disadvantages (barriers to) of HE internationalization policy-making in Ecuador. Conceptually, the thesis makes use of major rationales of HE internationalization as found in the literature on the theme, utilising a sufficient amount of sources. Methodologically, the research presented in the thesis is based upon a literature review (incl. domestic Ecuadorian sources) and interviews with eight representatives of selected institutions having a stake in the internationalization issues. However, in this respect, there is no explanation of the logic upon which the choice of the institutions was made (probably common sense); moreover and more problematically, there is no information if/how the formulation of the interview questions related to the conceptual rationales of internationalization used in the conceptual part of the thesis. The same applies to the coding of the collected data (any keywords in particular).

The thesis contains a lengthy contextual part which gives information on major systemic characteristics of Ecuadorian HE including outreaches and references to other domains (namely quality assurance). The inclusion of selected statistics, including numbers of incoming/students, is useful. The findings from the literature review, supported by the interviews, suggest the combination of internationalization rationales in place within the Ecuadorian HE system including their evolvement in time. This is a valid finding, complemented by the explicit identification of internationalization advantages and disadvantages. However, namely the discussion of the (dis)advantages, although reflecting upon actor's interview viewpoints, makes no reference to most of the secondary data presented in the contextual part (statistics incl. donor activities, publications, projects). In this respect, the *explicit* distinction between internationalization of teaching-related and research-related issues would be quite helpful. In effect, the contextual part, containing some valuable observations (generally pointing to the rising interest in HE internationalization under Rafael Correa's government in the last decade) seems rather detached from the empirical research.

Relevantly, in this light, the final holistic conclusion, corroborating the starting assumption of *still limited* HE internationalization in Ecuador (p. 79), is debatable and definitely merits further clarification, which is missing from the thesis. Also the thesis makes no attempt to explicitly link the issues of internationalization to other domains (namely quality assurance)



to which mentions are made (and space devoted) in the contextual part. However, the research questions are answered in the concluding part.

Regarding formal matters, the thesis shows just a small amount of grammatical mistakes.

From the above stated reasons, I recommend the thesis for defence and to be assessed by grade “D”.

Date: 7 September 2019

Signature: