

Environment for Transnational Education
Partnerships and UK Qualifications:
Challenges and Opportunities

Peru and UK

Findings and recommendations
from primary research

Part of Going Global Partnerships



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1. Introduction

This report reviews the international higher education environment in Peru and identifies challenges and opportunities for the development of international partnerships between Peruvian and UK universities. The report provides actionable recommendations and strategic pathways for designing interventions to overcome these challenges.

The report considers the emerging global challenges, such as the recent pandemic, the drive for sustainability, the future of work and the shift of focus from the 'Global North' to the 'Global South' ¹.

Data in this report is drawn from the following sources:

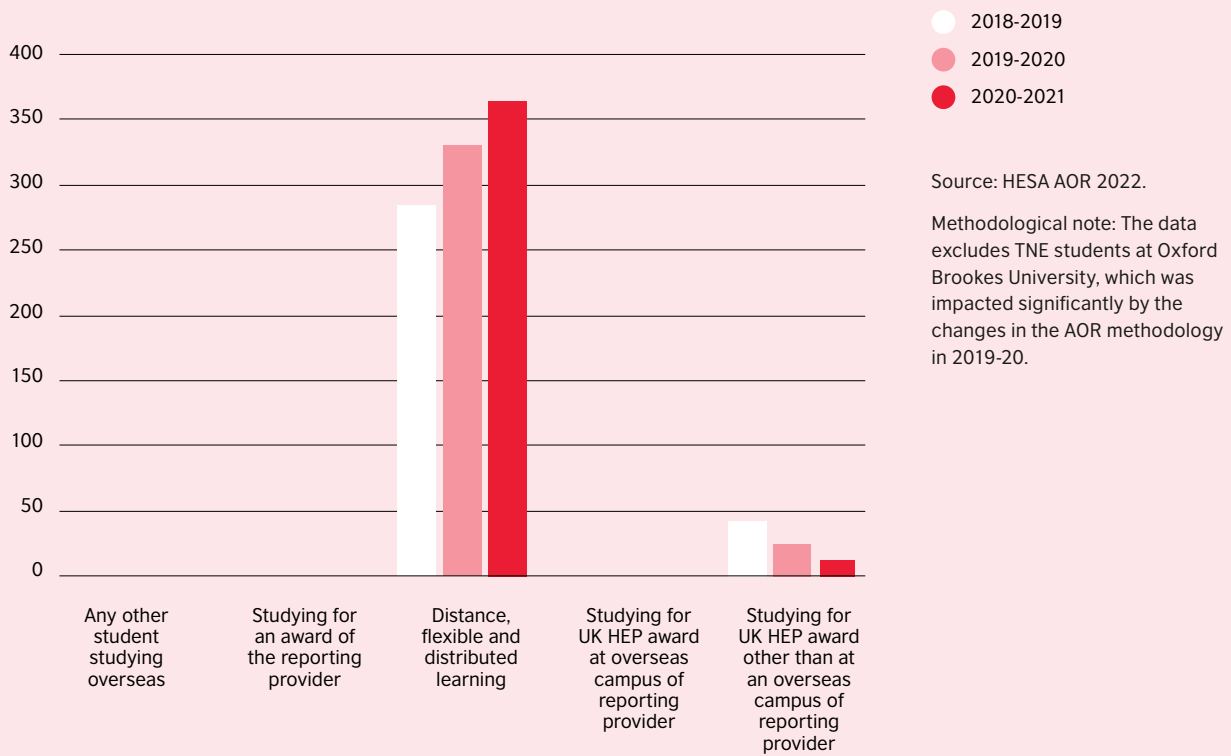
- Desk research of reports and other publications regarding international higher education, focusing on Peru, the UK, and Latin America.
- Primary research conducted for this project in March and April 2022. This comprises in-depth interviews conducted with Peruvian and UK stakeholders.
- Analysis of the UK Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) Aggregate Offshore Record (AOR) for 2022, to provide information on the current position on transnational education (TNE) provision for the academic year 2020-21.

2. Current position

2.1 UK TNE in Peru

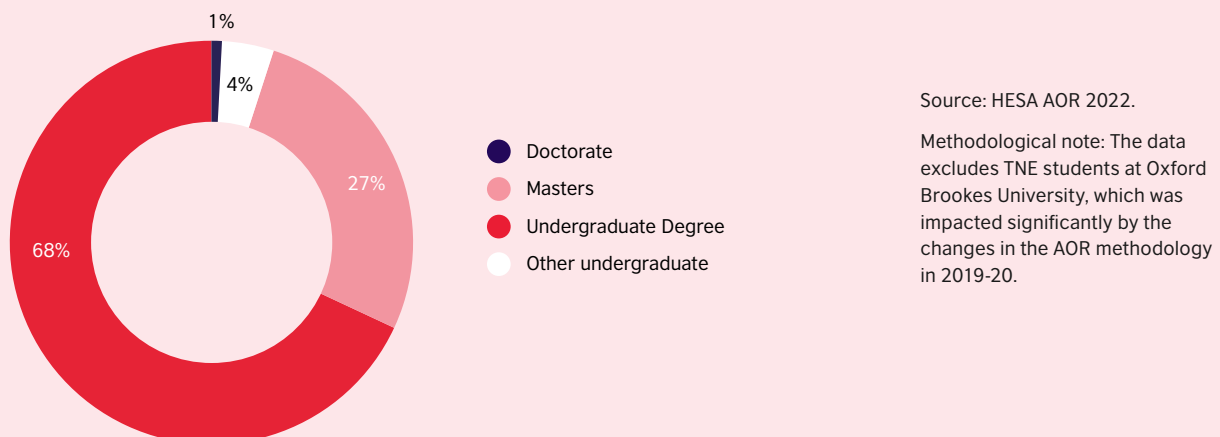
In 2020-21 Peru hosted a total of 370 students on UK TNE programmes. There has been a 31 per cent increase since 2018-19, but the student numbers remained relatively low compared with other countries. As shown in Figure 1, 365 students, which is almost the entirety (97 per cent) of UK TNE provision in Peru, study on distance, flexible and distributed learning programmes. Also, 70 per cent of these students (250 out of 365) are enrolled with one higher education institution (HEI).

Figure 1: Number of TNE students from 2018-19 to 2020-21



As in other partner countries, the bachelors’ degree students constitute the majority (68 per cent) of UK TNE provision in Peru. Around one in three (27 per cent) of UK TNE students in Peru study on postgraduate programmes.

Figure 2: The level of study of TNE students in 2020-21



2.2 The relative position of the UK as study abroad destination and research collaborator for Peru

Our analysis of outbound mobility shows a preference for regional mobility, with most outbound Peruvian students studying in Argentina. There is a clear preference for Spanish-speaking countries in the region and elsewhere (e.g., Spain). In the context of this study, it is essential to note the relatively low position of the UK in comparison with other traditional destination countries of international students – and especially the non-Spanish speaking countries: the USA, Germany, France and Australia.

Table 1: Top 10 destination countries for outbound students from Peru (latest year available)

	Country	2019	Change 2018-19
1	Argentina	18,089	9%
2	USA	3,332	4%
3	Spain	2,705	-3%
4	Chile	2,049	37%
5	Brazil	1,472	-1%
6	Germany	1,137	6%
7	France	925	4%
8	Australia	637	14%
9	UK	492	3%
10	Canada	462	33%

Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics UNESCO

According to the Scopus/Scival database, as summarised in Table 2, the UK ranks fourth as a research collaborator country for Peru. Overall, the UK typically ranks second as a research collaborator country for most UK TNE partner countries (Scival, 2022). For example, as summarised in Table 3, for the top 10 UK TNE host countries, the UK ranks as a research collaborator country as follows: Malaysia, first; China, second; Sri Lanka, third; Singapore, third; Hong Kong, third; Greece, first; Egypt, fourth; Oman, second; United Arab Emirates, second; Cyprus, second (Scival, 2022).

Table 2: Top 10 countries for international research collaboration in Peru by number of co-authored publications (2018-2021)

	Country or Region	Co-authored publications	Share of total co-authored publications in Peru	Co-authored publications growth (%)
1	USA	4,258	10%	46%
2	Brazil	2,683	6%	58%
3	Spain	1,889	4%	77%
4	UK	1,743	4%	52%
5	Colombia	1,453	3%	138%
6	Mexico	1,378	3%	72%
7	Chile	1,305	3%	47%
8	France	1,195	3%	21%
9	Germany	1,063	3%	57%
10	Argentina	1,013	2%	61%

Source: Scopus/Scival

Table 3: Position of the UK as international research collaborator for in the top 10 UK TNE host countries (2018-2021)

	Country or Region	Position of the UK as international research collaborator country
1	Malaysia	1
2	China	2
3	Sri Lanka	3
4	Singapore	3
5	Hong Kong	3
6	Greece	1
7	Egypt	4
8	Oman	2
9	UAE	2
10	Cyprus	2

The research collaboration between the UK and Peru, which is clearly evident by the volume of co-authored publications (Scival, 2022), does not generate TNE activity or outbound mobility to the UK – i.e., there are low numbers of UK TNE students in Peru and the UK is not a prime destination for students from Peru. This suggests extensive links at individual and institutional levels, with untapped potential for producing further collaboration around teaching partnerships and student mobility.

2.3 Bilateral UK-Peru economic activity

There is already substantial bilateral activity between the UK and Peru at an economic level. For example, according to the UK Department for International Trade the UK is the largest foreign investor in Peru, mostly in the mining sector.² Also, according to the same source, there is strong demand for UK goods and services in Peru following the high-profile success of the UK-Peru

government-to-government agreement.³ The UK-Peru agreement helped deliver the Lima 2019 Pan American Games (the third largest sports event globally), with support from UK businesses.⁴ A year later, in June 2020, the UK and Peru signed a £1.6 billion deal through a government-to-government agreement for the reconstruction of some of the country's public services facilities that were damaged in 2017 by El Niño.⁵ More recently, Peru's £18 billion economic recovery⁶ plan has offered the opportunity for new partnerships to support the country's green recovery, which is an area with great potential for bilateral collaboration with the UK.

Considering the increasing economic and investment activity of UK businesses in Peru, there is the potential for UK HEIs to provide technical expertise and knowledge transfer through TNE partnerships with local HEIs.

2 See <https://www.great.gov.uk/markets/peru/>.

3 See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-selected-as-perus-delivery-partner-to-rebuild-facilities-damaged-by-el-nino..>

4 See <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-to-be-main-delivery-partner-of-lima-2019-pan-american-games..>

5 See <http://www.infrastructure-intelligence.com/article/nov-2020/key-lessons-uk-infrastructure-exports-el-nino-rebuild..>

6 See <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/cultura/campa%C3%B1as/4356-plan-de-recuperacion-al-2030..>

3. Value of transnational education partnerships

The majority of students in Peru are either studying on local courses offered by the 93 licensed universities in the country⁷, or studying overseas, with a preference for nearby countries, like Argentina. Peru participates in several regional bilateral and multilateral initiatives that promote international cooperation and mobility.⁸

There is a lack of tangible evidence (e.g., the presence of TNE students, publicly available information for TNE programmes) to justify the existence of substantial TNE activity in Peru. There is evidence for a very small number of Peruvian universities participating in joint degrees pursued under the Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees programme⁹. For example, according to the Erasmus Mundus data, for the period from 2014 to 2020 there were only six such programmes in Peru¹⁰. The evidence available from UK HESA suggests a small UK TNE provision in Peru, mostly in the form of distance or online education. The existing UK TNE provision is small in relation to the size of the higher education (HE) sector in Peru and the relative size of UK TNE across different countries.

Hence, considering the size of the HE sector in Peru that provides opportunities for international partnerships and, most importantly, the growing student population in the country, there is a substantial unmet potential for TNE.

The value of existing UK TNE provision in Peru is found in the capacity building of local universities. One of the best examples of this is the Programme for the Improvement of the Quality and Relevance of Higher University and Technological Education Services at the National Level¹¹. This was created by the Peruvian Government and the Inter-American Development Bank with the aim of improving the availability of insights and knowledge for policymaking in HE, strengthening HEIs for the provision of quality service and developing adequate infrastructure for public HEIs. The British Council and the University of Liverpool worked with six Peruvian universities to support them in building their capacity to deliver online education. The programme had its objective to train teachers, students, and the universities' technical capabilities to offer online education with a high-quality course structure, content and teaching methodologies. Also, it strengthened teachers' capacity to deliver higher education in an online format by combining asynchronous (self-study) and synchronous teaching, and integrating an innovative design based on contemporary pedagogical principles. Lastly, it improved students' ability and effectiveness as online learners, adopting an active and reflective role, and equipped them with essential study skills.¹²

7 See <https://www.sunedu.gob.pe/lista-de-universidades-licenciadas/>.

8 See https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/erasmus-plus/factsheets/america-caribbean/peru_erasmusplus_2020_en.pdf.

9 See https://ec.europa.eu/assets/eac/erasmus-plus/factsheets/america-caribbean/peru_erasmusplus_2020_en.pdf.

10 2016:1; 2018:2; 2019:3, and none in 2020.

11 See <https://www.pmesut.gob.pe/nosotros>.

12 See <https://www.britishcouncil.pe/en/programmes/education/higher-education/online-teaching>.

4. Overview of the regulatory and policy frameworks

The Ministry of Education oversees higher education institutions, both public and private. The National Superintendence of University Education (SUNEDU) is a specialised technical body attached to the Ministry of Education, established by the University Law (Law No. 30220) promulgated in 2014, and is responsible for maintaining quality standards across higher education institutions. SUNEDU is also responsible for the recognition of foreign degrees.

With the Universities Law of 2014, the Peruvian government focused on resolving concerns about the quality of HEIs in Peru. Following the implementation of the stricter licencing requirements, as of January 2022 more than 48 universities and two graduate schools, most of them private, did not have their licence to operate renewed¹³.

Beyond the emphasis on improving the quality of HE, the recent reform of the Peruvian higher educational system included the internationalisation of higher education institutions. The University Law referenced support for internationalisation of higher education, based on one of the 14 principles of Article 5, whereby universities are obliged to internationalise to become more competitive. This is the first law in Peru to reference the Internationalisation of HE and its importance in improving the quality standards of HEIs.

In this context, and alongside its remit for the licensing and assurance of quality standards in HE, SUNEDU is tasked with promoting bilateral and multilateral cooperation to improve the internationalisation of the HE sector in Peru.¹⁴ This includes activities around knowledge exchange, best practices and sharing information, and developing international cooperation projects.

SUNEDU is also supporting the country's progress with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development's 'Recommendation of the Council concerning Guidelines for Quality Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education'.

From a regulatory point of view, an international institution is not allowed to provide educational services 'in situ' without a licence, even if it has an agreement with a Peruvian HEI. A new licensing process was introduced as part of the 2014 broader reforms in the HE sector in Peru. SUNEDU is the agency responsible for the licensing of new and existing universities in Peru.

The Peruvian Network for the Internationalization of Higher University Education (REDIPERU) is the only network that promotes internationalisation in Peru. REDIPERU was founded in 2015 as an initiative of a group of eight universities – two public and six private non-profits. In 2022, REDIPERU had 15 member institutions. REDIPERU is part of a broader internationalisation initiative in the region – the Latin American Initiative for Internationalisation of Higher Education – which includes counterparts from Brazil and Mexico. REDIPERU has participated in international conferences, such as the Association of International Education international conference in the United States, promoting Peru's HE.

REDIPERU has reported a significant expansion of online education since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. The shift to online working and learning, and virtual modes of collaboration has changed the public's perceptions of online education. Collaborative Online International Learning is becoming integrated into the traditional face-to-face delivery models¹⁵. At the government level, there has been considerable support for the integration of technology in the

13 See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Md2COVSJdZy>; <https://www.sunedu.gob.pe/lista-de-universidades-denegadas/>.

14 See www.minedu.gob.pe/superiortecnologica/pdf/rvm-n-020-2019-aprueba-la-cbc-de-licenciamiento.pdf.

15 See <https://www.ue.edu.pe/conferencias-y-charlas/coordinadora-general-de-rediperu-participo-del-encuentro-de-redes-para-la-internacionalizacion-en-america-latina...>

delivery of higher education through the partnership with the Inter-American Development Bank entitled 'Programme for the Improvement of the Quality and Relevance of Higher University and Technological Education Services at the National Level'.

The treaty on the mutual recognition of degrees between Peru and the UK was signed in 2018¹⁶. However, several factors, including the disruption caused by Brexit and COVID-19, delayed its enforcement until May 2021¹⁷. The agreement recognises and validates academic degrees issued by authorised HEIs of each party. Article 4 sets out the types of degrees awarded by higher education authorities in Peru that will be comparable to a UK bachelors', masters' or doctoral degree, or postgraduate diploma (and vice versa). The evidence from our interviews suggest that business programmes are the ones that are most internationalised—particularly related to joint degree studies. Prior to the treaty, there was a streamlined automatic process for the recognition of qualifications involving foreign universities high in global rankings. The implementation of the treaty is expected to open the market for a broader range of HEIs in the UK that do not fit the criteria for the automatic recognition process.

With the support of the British Council SUNEDU developed a communication strategy to disseminate the benefits related to the treaty on the mutual recognition of degrees between Peru and the UK. With the engagement of SUNEDU, the Peruvian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Development Office, and UK ENIC, a sustained communication campaign from October 2021 to February 2022

included the collaborative construction of information and contents for a SUNEDU online site¹⁸ and a webinar on the benefits of the Peru-UK agreement and the opportunities it generates. At the same time, the interviewees at Peruvian universities appear unaware of the treaty. This could be explained by the existing engagement of Peruvian HEIs, which is mostly with UK HEIs high in global rankings and allows an automatic recognition process of qualification. Hence, so far, there has not been extensive operational engagement with the Peru-UK agreement at individual or institutional level.

The evidence from our interviews suggests that despite the recent regulatory and policy emphasis on internationalisation, only a small number of Peruvian universities have been active in international higher education. According to a HE senior representative, the low engagement with internationalisation is reflected in the fact that Peruvian universities are not ranked highly in the global university rankings, where internationalisation is one of the key indicators. The interviews revealed substantial interest in the development of joint degrees. According to a senior manager of international affairs at a public Peruvian university, there is demand for dual and joint degree partnerships with UK universities because of the high reputation of the UK HE sector in Peru and the prospects for students to continue to postgraduate or research studies in the UK.

However, the interviews indicate that the existing initiatives are limited and restricted to a small number of private universities, as the process in the public universities is heavily bureaucratic, discouraging their participation.

16 See <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ukperu-treaty-on-the-mutual-recognition-of-degrees-cs-peru-no12021>.

17 See https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/986014/EM_CS_Peru_1.2021_UK_Peru_Treaty_Mutual_Recognition_of_Degrees.odt.

18 See <https://www.gob.pe/institucion/sunedu/campa%C3%B1as/5929-criterios-para-facilitar-el-mutuo-reconocimiento>.

5. Challenges for education co-ordination and transnational education provision

The interviews have identified capacity issues (i.e., availability of staff and skills) and process-related inefficiencies (i.e., the time and cost of validating foreign degrees) that hinder the development of TNE partnerships. Bureaucracy, lack of institutional objectives and staff incentives are among the challenges most cited by the interviewees. Also, the design of HE programmes in Peru is often incompatible with foreign programmes, thus making the process of benchmarking and validation of a dual or joint degree a difficult task.

5.1 Lack of data on HE and TNE provision

There is no official HE data collection or local data on the provision of TNE in Peru. The governmental officials interviewed, and representatives from university networks such as REDIPERU, highlighted the importance of reliable and current information and its critical contribution to the implementation and monitoring of the internationalisation of higher education in the country.

5.2 Lack of unified national strategy for the internationalisation of higher education

There is no official HE data collection or local data on the provision of TNE in Peru. The governmental officials interviewed, and representatives from university networks such as REDIPERU, highlighted the importance of reliable and current information and its critical contribution to the implementation and monitoring of the internationalisation of higher education in the country.

Collaborations Partnerships

5.3 Limitations on the human resources required to support effective internationalisation

At present, most managers overseeing the internationalisation in Peruvian universities are academics, not professional services staff. As such, they have competing priorities in balancing their academic career with the internationalisation priorities of their university. Often, such appointments are politically motivated, and once the term of the university leadership ends, the entire university's senior management is changed. These leadership transitions have a negative impact on the staff in charge of internationalisation.

5.4 Limited language skills among academic staff and students

All interviewees at the government and the university levels agreed that limited foreign language skills restrict collaboration with non-Spanish-speaking academic institutions. This is evidenced by Peru's 56th position (out of 112 countries) in the English Proficiency Index ranking¹⁹. The country is ranked at the bottom of the 'moderate proficiency' group of countries.

Other challenges include the lack of international visibility of Peruvian universities, small budgets for international activities, and limited capacity to attract qualified staff

5.5 Limited government financial support and currency depreciations hindering international student mobility

The Peruvian government has limited study abroad scholarships. Consecutive local currency devaluations add to the difficulties of financing international education. Discussions on the returns of public investment often equate the cost of funding the university education of several home students with that of sending one student abroad.

Currency depreciations imply the fees to study abroad are significantly more expensive than those at local universities. The pandemic brought economic downturns in many countries, which exert additional financial pressures on families and limits their ability to educate their children overseas.

5.6 Uncertainty of graduate employability and problems in recognition of foreign qualifications

The job prospects of young graduates in Peru are uncertain. Workers under 25 are two and a half times more likely than those over 25 to work in sectors that have been closed because of the pandemic. Recent graduates will face an additional challenge in their loan repayments. In the case of regulated careers such as engineering and medicine, there is an additional level of resistance on the part of the professional bodies to recognise foreign degrees that have gained SUNEDU's recognition. In that case, the best way to validate the qualifications is through a Peruvian university.

6. Recommendations

As outlined in the previous sections, HE in Peru is undergoing a number of challenges and reforms, primarily focused on the quality of HEIs. At the same time, there is an increasing acknowledgement by local stakeholders of the need to develop the engagement of Peruvian HEIs with internationalisation activities and particularly TNE partnerships.

Despite the high number of HEIs in Peru, there is a considerable number of outbound students from Peru, who choose to study abroad primarily because of quality and employability-related factors. Also, although there have been significant improvements in the participation rate for HE, access to good quality HE is fragmented between the most wealthy parts of the population and those who live in urban areas.

The existing UK TNE provision in Peru is small in comparison to the size of both the Peruvian HE sector and the UK TNE provision in other host countries. However, there is a considerable research collaboration between the UK and Peruvian HEIs that, as in other UK TNE partner countries, can generate TNE partnerships and student mobility activities. Also, significant economic and investment activity from the UK in Peru creates additional prospects for the development of UK TNE partnerships there.

The recommendations below reflect on the above broad dynamics and the challenges summarised in the previous section of this report.

6.1 All key stakeholders

Create TNE partnerships that are focused on widening participation in quality higher education

In the past 20 years, Peru has achieved to increase its gross enrolment rate to 71 per cent in 2017, which is higher than the regional average of 52 per cent in Latin America. Also, Peru has succeeded in closing the gender gap in participation in higher education (World Bank, 2020). However, despite this improvement in participation in higher education, there are still inequalities related to household wealth and place of residence that impact the HE participation and completion rates for certain parts of Peru's population. Also, there are concerns about the ability of students from these population groups to enrol in good quality universities. The evidence indicate that wealthier students and those who live in certain, mostly urban, parts of the country are more likely to enrol and complete a good quality higher education course.

TNE partnerships involving an online component can be used to address these specific access issues and contribute to widening participation in the HE in Peru. This type of TNE partnership allows a cost-effective provision of higher education that is accessible to students from less wealthy economic backgrounds and those who live in remote areas.

6.2 Peruvian universities

Create a university internationalisation strategy with measurable objectives and dedicate resources to its implementation

One of the key challenges for the development of TNE partnerships in Peru that emerged from the interviews is the lack of a specific and coherent internationalisation strategy in Peruvian HEIs. Also, because of the lack of specific objectives and strategic direction at an institutional level, academic staff at Peruvian HEIs are not motivated to engage in internationalisation activities.

It is recommended that Peruvian universities consider developing an internationalisation strategy that includes measurable goals in the context of the two dimensions of internationalisation: international collaborations, and the internationalisation of the student experience (internationalisation at home).

The presence of an internationalisation strategy will motivate academic staff to engage in and seek ways to develop international activities. Also, it will promote the internationalisation of the Peruvian HE, which in turn will create improvements in quality. Lastly, considering its central role in rankings (e.g., Times Higher, QS), improvement in the internationalisation of Peruvian HEIs will improve their ranking position.

At the same time, the implementation of the internationalisation strategy needs to be supported by dedicated resources. The evidence from the interviews points to the lack of dedicated senior management who will have ownership of the implementation of the internationalisation strategy in each Peruvian HEI. Also, the evidence points to a lack of adequate training of academics and administrators in the internationalisation of higher education. Hence, the development of an internationalisation strategy needs to be supported by appropriate resources that include: senior management staff responsible for the strategy implementation; focused training for academics and administrators; and financial resources.

6.3 Peruvian policymakers

Introduce a national internationalisation strategy for HE

The Peruvian government, in Article 5 of the University Law, has already recognised the importance of internationalisation as a driver for improvements in the quality of Peru's HE sector. However, despite some government-led initiatives to promote the internationalisation of Peru's HE, there is no national internationalisation strategy.

A national internationalisation strategy acts as the framework within which the Peruvian government can develop and coordinate the implementation of the specific actions that achieve the policy objectives. Also, such a national-level strategy is an important prerequisite for the coordination of the internationalisation activities planned and pursued by Peruvian HEIs. Lastly, the presence of a national internationalisation strategy provides clear information to external stakeholders (i.e., foreign policy markets and HEIs) about the strategic priorities of Peru regarding the internationalisation of its HE.

The Peruvian government needs to articulate a national HE internationalisation strategy around the two key pillars of internationalisation – international partnerships and internationalisation at home (i.e., Peruvian HEI programmes, and the student experience).

6.4 UK policymakers

Integrate and optimise existing bilateral and multilateral national strategies and initiatives

There have been several bilateral and multilateral initiatives involving Peru and the UK. For example, the UK is an essential ally in the infrastructure sector, providing support in the development of the National Infrastructure Plan, and the trade agreement between the two countries that recently came into force allows for British investments in and exports to Peru, and vice versa, with no additional tariffs or barriers²⁰.

However, the impact of these initiatives is often not fully captured and communicated across different stakeholder groups. There is a need to visualise the path of the multilateral contributions the UK government is making in Latin America, and more specifically Peru, and engage in catalysing the impact involving higher education. For example, the academic community's role in expanding and strengthening bilateral initiatives in areas such as trade and infrastructure could be explored.

6.5 UK Universities

Understand the contextual factors that impact the nature of international collaborations

UK universities seeking to engage with international collaborations in Peru need to understand the significant regional disparities in economic profile, internet access, and other critical factors for participation in higher education. Also, higher education in Peru is undergoing significant transformation, focusing on resolving quality issues and improving the employability of graduates. This creates an environment where the priorities and capabilities of UK and Peruvian HEIs could be substantially misaligned. Hence, any consideration of establishing international collaborations in Peru requires UK universities to be aware of the contextual issues and priorities. Focusing on developing international collaborations with a focus on widening access and improving graduate employability could help UK universities align their objectives with those of the Peruvian HEIs.

Provide essential information to Peruvian HEIs

The interviews with senior managers of Peruvian universities identified the need for clear information about which UK universities are seeking to develop partnerships with Peruvian HEIs. Also, the interviews suggest the need for information from UK universities about their objectives for collaborating with Peruvian HEIs.

6.6 British Council

Devise and implement a targeted communication strategy about the value of TNE between Peruvian and UK HEIs

The British Council needs to work with UK universities in communicating across all stakeholder groups – universities, students, and the government – the potential impact and value of TNE. Provisions in product development, marketing, and communication will play a fundamental role in familiarising the Peruvian stakeholders with the potential for cooperation between the two countries.

Also, considering the relatively low position of the UK as a destination country for outbound students from Peru, there is a need for targeted promotion to strengthen the visibility of the UK higher education system.

Improve availability of information and mapping of strategic priorities of local HEIs

To support the implementation of the UK International Education Strategy in engagement with Peru and the broader South America region, the British Council needs to target improving the awareness of UK HEIs' understanding of the Peruvian HE system and the strategic mindset of local HEIs. Equally important is the need to survey local universities' strategic priorities, including internationalisation, and identify areas of mutual interest.

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