

Recognition of foreign professional degrees in Peru: Processes and strategies for improvement

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Abstract

This brief article describes the recognition process of foreign professional degrees in Peru. A documentary review of the Peruvian regulations regarding the recognition process and its legal origin is carried out. Supreme Decrees, Laws and directorial resolutions were used as inputs. Flexibility was found in the recognition process of accepting foreign degrees in Peru. Recognizing foreign professional titles is based only on an administrative procedure and not on any academic criteria. An academic evaluation of professional qualifications is lacking in the recognition process as it is simply an administrative evaluation. The academic evaluation process could be based on a knowledge examination to ensure that the professionals to be recognized have a high level of knowledge. Several academic requirements must be incorporated to ensure entry into the labor market for suitable professionals of a high academic level.

Keywords: Education; Peru; professional degree; recognition of foreign professional degrees; universities.

Introduction

The fall of the Berlin Wall is considered one of the most critical events in human history (Bohn & Berntsen, 2007; Marsh & Köller, 2004). Although globalization is an event that has existed for decades, the fall of the Berlin Wall has been an important event for the further expansion of human activities around the world (Hoskins & Todd, 2018; Sriramesh, 2008; Zurn, 2010). The wall's fall meant the collapse of European socialism, opening new markets from the West and motivating greater commercial exchange without borders (Monshipouri & Motameni, 2000; Vallet & David, 2012).

The growth of globalization has caused many benefits in the world's population, one of the effects of the increase in trade between countries (Borchert & Yotov, 2017; Deardorff & Stern, 2002; Harrison, 2006). Because of this, Europe opened all markets, making it easier for citizens to move from one country to another (Meunier, 2007). With the demographic movement, people also had to adapt to each country's new labor markets, customs and educational models. For the latter and other reasons, the Bologna Plan and the European Higher Education Area were created in the European Community (European Commission, 2023). The aim of this plan was to:

1. Introduce a three-cycle higher education system of bachelor's, master's and doctoral studies.
2. Ensure mutual recognition of qualifications and periods of learning abroad completed at other universities.
3. Implement a quality assurance system to strengthen the quality and relevance of learning and teaching.

Based on the European Union's Bologna Plan, several countries have recognized the need to update their procedures to register the studies of people who study in a different country. This becomes more urgent due to the greater immigration that exists in different regions, which leads professionals to work in other countries (Bastia & Piper, 2019; Segal, 2019).

Before the pandemic, global citizens' efforts had already been reported, which implies studying in different countries (Koukouraki, 2020). During COVID-19, virtual education allowed the internationalization of collaborations (Sam, 2022). After the pandemic, the migration of professionals

has increased further, boosting markets and education. However, there is a critical question: How is these professionals' training equivalent to or close to professionals in the destination country? When these migrants arrive in these countries, they seek to work in the professions using the qualifications they have obtained in their countries, so they need to register their professional titles in the National Registry of Degrees and Titles to practice their profession.

In this scenario, each country has a different mechanism to recognize professional degrees issued in other countries. Are they the most appropriate mechanisms? Can they be improved? This article presents the case of the procedures to register a professional title and demonstrates the evolution of recognition in Peru. This expected content can be considered for analysis by others to improve their professional title recognition processes.

Methodology

A non-experimental, retrospective, qualitative, and descriptive design was used. The legal documents regulating professional degree recognition in Peru were evaluated. We searched the official Peruvian newspaper "El Peruano" web page. Likewise, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the National Superintendence of University Higher Education (SUNEDU for its acronym in Spanish) are reviewed. The selection criteria for legal documents comprises current documents available on the institutions above' web pages. These documents must contain specific information on the processes of registration and recognition of professional degrees obtained in countries other than Peru. The main objective is to know the academic and administrative requirements requested by the Peruvian authorities to recognize professional degrees. The requirements requested by the National Superintendence of University Higher Education are evaluated.

Results and discussion

Based on the information obtained, the processes of registration and recognition of professional degrees in Peru are described.

Methods of registration of professional titles in Peru

In Peru, using Decree-Law No. 17437 - Organic Law of the Peruvian University (President of Peru, 1969a), the revalidation of titles, degrees and studies obtained or carried out abroad was implemented. According to the Decree Law, "revalidation could be carried out exclusively by specifically qualified universities" (President of Peru, 1969a). According to the Peruvian legal system, this would be the first norm in which there is a legal figure where a title, degree or study obtained abroad can be registered in Peru. Subsequently, in the same year, Decree Law No. 17662, which stipulates that professional degrees obtained in other countries is recognized without revalidation (President of Peru, 1969b), was published. In its first article, it is stated that professional degrees obtained in the universities of

countries with a treaty or agreement of cultural reciprocity shall be recognized without the requirement of revalidation. It also indicates that the institution in charge of registering them was the National Council of the University (President of Peru, 1969b).

The registration method for foreign professional degrees has not changed since 1969. In Peru, the National Superintendence of University Higher Education (SUNEDU) is the institution in charge of registering professional degrees and titles. There are two ways to register these professional degrees in the country: recognition and revalidation. Despite the current regulations, the revalidation and recognition processes continue in Peru. Considering that recognition is created as an exception to revalidation, we first proceed to explain what the latter consists of.

About revalidation

According to Law 30220 - University Law (Congress of Peru, 2014), the National Superintendence of University Higher Education has as one of its functions "to establish the technical criteria for the validation and revalidation of studies, degrees and titles obtained in other countries." For this reason, the National Superintendence of University Higher Education Board of Directors, through Resolution No. 119-2019-SUNEDU/CD, establishes the technical criteria for the revalidation of degrees and titles granted abroad (National Superintendence of Higher University Education, 2019). In the National Superintendence of University Higher Education Board of Directors Resolution, revalidation is defined as:

...the procedure through which effects are granted in national territory to the degree or title granted by a foreign educational institution as a consequence of having passed an academic evaluation carried out by a university licensed to provide higher university educational service in Peru (National Superintendence of Higher University Education, 2019).

The technical criteria established in the resolution are presented in Figure 1. The Institutional Licensing criterion refers to the fact that to revalidate, the university must have a valid institutional license granted by the National Superintendence of University Higher Education (National Superintendence of Higher University Education, 2019). In the same sense, the criterion of academic experience refers to the degree program having at least ten graduating classes. The third criterion refers to the Academic Committee, which must have at least 3 members. At least one must be a regular professor, another a research professor, and all members must have a master's or doctorate in the same professional field related to the degree or title to be revalidated. Finally, they must comply with the other requirements of the University Law.

The fourth criterion refers to the evaluation of the revalidation, where if there is a minimum of 80% equivalence of the content of the courses, the revalidation can proceed. The university may choose the best way to reach 80% of similarity if the percentage is lower. The fifth criterion

indicates that if the degree has been obtained through research work or thesis; this must also have been presented. The sixth criterion is that the university must verify that the person performing the revalidation must also know a second language as per the University Law.

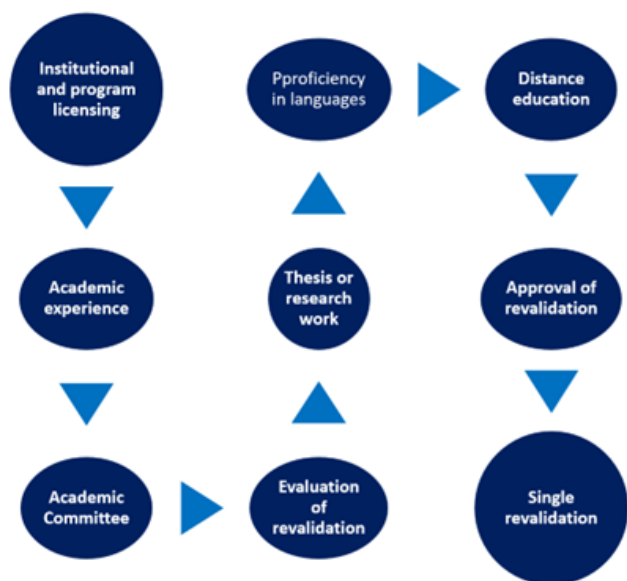


Figure 1. Enrollment in the National Registry of Degrees and Titles.

It has been detailed that recognition is granted by the National Superintendence of University Higher Education through administrative procedures when there are Instruments for the Recognition of Academic Degrees and Titles (IRGAT). Revalidation, which is the ordinary procedure in the absence of IRGAT, is a more complex procedure. In addition to the usual administrative procedures, revalidation involves the completion of an academic evaluation (Rojas, 2016). In the case of distance studies, the seventh criterion indicates that what is mentioned in the University Law is considered.

About recognition

National Superintendence of University Higher Education, in its Resolution of the Board of Directors N° 099-2020-SUNEDU/CD (National Superintendence of Higher University Education, 2020) Regulations for the Recognition of Degrees and Degrees Granted Abroad, defines Recognition as:

...the administrative act by which the State, through National Superintendence of University Higher Education, grants effectiveness to the degrees and titles obtained abroad by evaluating their conformity with the quality criteria or the legal obligations assumed by the Republic of Peru by a treaty.

Likewise, it can be observed that among the requirements requested for the administrative process are not certificates of studies or academic transcripts. Only the diploma with the Apostille of The Hague is requested, or in any case, a database that corroborates the student's study (National Superintendence of Higher University Education, 2023) (Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison of criteria/requirements among recognition and revalidation.

Criteria/Requirements	Recognition	Revalidation
Diploma	Yes	Yes
Certificate of studies	No	Yes
Type of evaluation	Administrative	Academic
Proceed to	Agreements and Schedules	Programs of the university to be revalidated
Deadline	30 working days	According to university regulations

How could the National Superintendence of University Higher Education safeguard educational and professional quality in Peru, without information on the content of the courses it recognizes?

On the other hand, it has been reported that:

... by the principle of presumption of veracity, the recognition procedure admits the presentation of documents issued by foreign institutions or entities, with which there is not necessarily interoperability that would allow the National Superintendence of University Higher Education to verify their authenticity within the maximum legal term (Orellana, 2020, p. 23).

Reference is made to the former National Assembly of Rectors (ANR for its acronym in Spanish), and we compare the recognition procedure of the National Assembly of Rectors and National Superintendence of University Higher Education. In that case, it is observed that the level of evaluation has decreased. The recognition procedure at the National Assembly of Rectors was regulated by Ministerial Resolution No. 0035-2011-ED – Procedures for the recognition and total legal value in Peru of degrees granted by accredited universities by the States with which trade agreements, cultural agreements and others are signed. The Ministry of Education, through the Resolution mentioned above, defines recognition as the "act intended to grant academic or professional validity in Peru to an academic degree, professional title or certificates of studies obtained in a foreign university institution ..." (Ministry of Education of Peru, 2011).

As can be seen, the recognition of the National Assembly of Rectors also granted validity to degrees or titles. However, when reviewing the requirements requested by the National Assembly of Rectors, it can be observed that in addition to the National Superintendence of University Higher Education, the Certificate of Studies was requested. Furthermore, to recognize a masters or doctorate, the previous degrees were requested to be registered (Ministry of Education of Peru, 2011) (Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison of criteria among National Superintendence of University Higher Education and National Assembly of Rectors.

Criteria	National Superintendence of University Higher Education	National Assembly of Rectors
Diploma	Yes	Yes
Certificates of studies	No	Yes
Official translations	No	Yes
Simple translation	Yes	No

In addition, extra requirements were indicated when a degree in the medical field was recognized per Resolution No. 610-2008-ANR - Regulations of the Office of Recognition and Certificates of the General Secretariat of the National Assembly of Rectors.

The additional requirements for the medical area were proof of completion of the hospital rotation. If the internship was done abroad, it must be for six months (specialties of Medicine, Surgery, Gynecology-Obstetrics and Pediatrics). If the rotation was not performed in Peru, it must be for one year and in the same specialties as the foreigners. Finally, when the applicant has more than 3 years of professional experience, they may undergo an interview to recognize the applicant's experience (National Assembly of Rectors, 2008). Table 3 compares the requirements for recognizing foreign professional degrees in health between the National Superintendence of University Higher Education and the National Assembly of Rectors.

Table 3. Comparison of criteria among National Superintendence of University Higher Education and National Assembly of Rectors for foreign professional degrees.

Criteria	National Superintendence of University Higher Education	National Assembly of Rectors
Diploma	Yes	Yes
Certificates of Studies	No	Yes
Study plan	No	Yes
Hospital Rotation	No	Yes

The National Superintendency of Higher University Education (SUNEDU), in an official letter No. 9328-2022-SUNEDU-03-08-04, confirmed the number of approvals of professional titles in 2020 (2809), 2021 (4122) and January-April 2022 (1521).

Opportunities for improvement

The system can be improved through a crowdsourcing strategy to ensure the academic-professional level of the professionals working in Peru. In this regard, the professional associations should be convened to analyze the previous and current processes, evaluate the positive and negative aspects of both processes, and develop a consensus proposal to improve the process, ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of the academic and professional quality of the applicant.

On the other hand, it is necessary to evaluate the requirements requested in other countries to recognize, through benchmarking, the most beneficial aspects that can be incorporated into the current process in Peru. The information provided by countries in Latin America, such as Argentina (Ministry of Education of Argentina, 2023), Bolivia (Ministry of Education of Bolivia, 2023), and Chile (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Chile, 2023), can be taken as an example. Information from Oceania (Medical Board Ahpra, 2023), Africa (South African Qualifications Authority, 2023), Asia (Ministry of Labor of Taiwan, 2023), and Europe (Federal Ministry of Education and Research of Germany, 2023) is valuable to consider in generating a proposal to improve the process of recognition of professional qualifications.

Conclusion

An analysis of the procedures for registering a professional degree in Peru shows that recognition is merely an administrative procedure without academic review; on the other hand, revalidation is the ordinary procedure for registering a foreign professional degree in Peru, and when there is a trade agreement, recognition can be made. When comparing the requirements demanded by the former National Assembly of Rectors and the current National Superintendence of University Higher Education, it is recognized that the requirements have been decreasing and, consequently, the evaluation level.

Regarding professional medical degrees, the former National Assembly of Rectors requested more requirements such as "hospital rotation". This decrease in the requirements can generate the situation that some professionals do not have an academic-professional level equivalent to Peruvian professionals, with the related risks and consequences, especially in medicine. In this sense, it can be concluded that the recognition process in Peru has been losing its requirements and quality, which may allow a professional who does not have the specific knowledge of Peru to practice as a professional.

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