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## LEGITIMATION THROUGH THE RANKINGS: CASE OF A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN BRAZIL

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### ABSTRACT

The importance of national and international university rankings for their legitimacy in the institutional field has questioned the researches and leaders of the institutions for a closer look at this issue. The objective of this paper was to analyze the influence of the performance indicators of the internationalization of rankings as legitimacy for the institutional field of a public higher education. For this, from a list of more than 10 available rankings, two rankings were selected, one at national level (Ranking UniversitárioFolha, in Portuguese, or Folha University Rankings) and one international (Times Higher Education World University Rankings). The article was divided into two parts, the first with the survey of the data obtained from the listings of these rankings and the second, a semi-structured interview with two heads involved with the management of the studied institution, State University of Maringá from Brazil. The results suggest that a better ranking in the university rankings may suggest a higher visibility in the institutional field, it is like a reputation that can engage the external community; and suggest understanding the major purpose of internationalization which is to form a complete citizen for society.

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## INTRODUÇÃO

The Higher Education Institutions (HEI) are competing against each other and be classified by their performance indicators promoted by governments or private sector, which attempt to measure the quality of the different educational areas and services offered (Ordorika & Gómez, 2010). Among the rankings of universities, national and international, we chose the *Ranking Universitário Folha* (RUF) and the Times Higher Education World University Rankings (THE). The RUF is an annual evaluation of Brazil's higher education carried out by Folha (a Brazilian newspaper) since 2012 (RUF, 2019). The RUF works with the evaluation of two main products: (1) ranking of Brazilian universities: 196 public and private universities were evaluated in 2018 and (2) course rankings of these universities (RUF, 2019). In this study, we used the item 1 of this evaluation - university ranking - because it is considered more appropriate in the analysis of the general information of university. The RUF analyzes five performance indicators that classify universities, like: Education, Research, Industry Income, Innovation and Internationalization. We choose as a unit of study analysis the performance indicator: Internationalization. It is a total of 4% of the evaluation and it is divided into two components, (1) International citations by teachers - equivalent to 2% - which is the average of international citations received in 2016 by the articles of university teachers on the Web of Science platform (2) Publications with international authors - equivalent to the other 2% - analyzes the percentage of publications from 2011 to 2015 in partnership with foreign researchers in relation to the total publications of the institution, also by the Web of Science platform (RUF, 2019).

While the RUF is a national ranking, we decided to choose an international ranking to understand the importance of such visibility outside the country, in this case it was selected the Times Higher Education World University Rankings (British newspaper) - it is better known as THE World University Rankings - which in the study is titled only as THE. THE was founded in 2004, headquartered in London, with the aim of promoting a list of 1,000 best universities in the world to help students choose where to study. THE evaluates the total 13 separate performance indicators, covering five areas of core activities of a major university, like: Education, Research, Citations, Industry Income and International Outlook (The, 2019). The internationalization performance indicator about THE has a 7.5% mark among all five performance indicators, this indicator is divided into three components - each one representing 2.5% - like: (1) international-to-domestic student ratio; (2) international-to-domestic staff ratio and (3) international collaboration (The, 2019). We noted that this ranking evaluates the ratio of international students and staff in the university, increasing the understanding of the RUF ranking. Besides ranking the top 1000 universities in the world, THE has a separate ranking that list of the best courses (large area of study: Clinical & Health; Life Sciences; Physical Sciences; Engineering & Innovation; Arts & Humanities; Business & Economics; Computer Science; Education; Psychology; Social Sciences). Isto é, nem todos os cursos das universidades são avaliados no ranking, ao contrário do RUF que avalia todos os cursos das 196 universidades ranqueadas. That is, not all university courses are ranked in the ranking, unlike the RUF which evaluates all courses of the 196 ranked universities. According to Ball (2002), the rankings allow to guarantee certain legitimacy for the universities. About Institutional Theory, legitimacy can be understood as a generalized perception that the actions of an

organization are recognized and considered appropriate within a social system constructed according to norms, values and beliefs (Suchman, 1995). So legitimacy can be given formal and informal, but also the actions should be related with the system of meanings to agents that field. For Scott (2001), the survival and prosperity of organizations also depend on acceptability and social credibility. The internationalization of HEI is defined as "the process in which part of an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and provision of post-secondary education" (Knight, 2003, p. 2). In which HEIs can internationalize in a variety of ways, such as: international mobility of students, teachers and staff; activities taught in a foreign language on campus; language courses offered at HEI; articles submitted for international journals; interaction between teachers and local and foreign students; disciplines focused on foreign aspects, among others (Crowther; Ferguson; Hann, 2009; Oliveira; Freitas, 2016). The study aimed to understand the influence of the internationalization performance indicators of rankings as legitimacy for the institutional field of a Brazilian public university. The study justifies the need for a better understanding and adequacy of the term internationalization for a university contextualized in an emerging country, especially when it standardizes this term worldwide and equates the evaluation metrics of the universities of "poor" countries with those of "rich" countries. We start from the understanding that the internationalization of a Brazilian university may be different from the internationalization of a European university and it is necessary to interconnect with institutional theory to understand how legitimacy occurs through the rankings for universities in emerging countries. Finally, our study contributes to the literature because there is a gap about studies on university rankings. Moreover, how rankings influence universities and community, especially when considering an emerging country and uses internationalization as the focus of the study, since it is necessary to define internationalization differently for emerging countries. The article is organized as follows: the next section will present a review of the literature, discussing institutional theory and internationalization within universities; then the methodology is presented, explaining the procedure for data collection; later, the study findings are discussed, presenting the university's rankings and the influence of these rankings; e, por fim, serão abordadas as conclusões e as limitações do estudo com sugestão para pesquisas futuras and finally, the conclusions and limitations of the study with suggestion for future research will be approached.

### **Revisão da litehow institutional theory and internationalization relate with university ranking**

**Institutional Theory:** Institutional Theory proposes the analysis and understanding of the interdependence relationship between the organization and environment (Dimaggio; Powell, 1983), in which we consider the university researched as an organization. According to Crubellate (2008, p.1) "environments and organizations are mutually explanatory, since there are no organizations that exist in a social vacuum". Thus, this approach argues that organizations need to relate to the macro environment that it is inserted to develop. This approach is divided between the old and the new institutionalism, or rather, between the first and second phases of Institutional Theory. And the works developed by Meyer and Rowan (1977) and Dimaggio and Powell (1983) are the first steps towards what would later be considered as a new institutionalism (Dimaggio; Powell, 1983). The focus given to the new institutional approach lies in the cognitive aspects of organizational actors, as intermediaries between contingent pressures and organizational responses, organizations are understood as a socially constructed phenomenon, a representation of the set of human actions, interactions cultural and political, cognitive and symbolic processes that constitute it (Crubellate; Grave; Mendes, 2004). It is a fact that sociological institutionalists have turned more to the interest of explaining uniformity (isomorphism) than the diversity of organizations. However, as Hall and Taylor (2003) argue, institutions are only the partial product of rational individuals, and they rarely act according to a single institutional reference and in a totally responsive way.

That is, it is important to think about the relation of the environment, organization and action of the individual as something recursive. In the new institutionalism the aspect of the strategic agency of the organization is highlighted, which is a bit of isomorphism, proposing more explanations for the organizational diversity. Organizations are permeated by the environment "on the form of information and, like all information, is subject to the problems of communication and decision making that have been identified. Environmental information is information to be processed" (Hall, 2004, p. 204). Therefore, cognitive aspects are considered for the decision-making process, since it is the cognitive process that allows the interpretation of institutional demands and which it is linked to the common framework of meanings (Scott, 2008). To understand the phenomenon of legitimacy and its intimate dependence on the processes of interpretation and construction of meaning present in the new institutional theory is important for this study. For Suchman (1995, p. 574) "legitimacy is a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions". If the organization is in compliance with rules, laws, normative issues and the prevailing cognitive cultural framework, it will be given legitimacy. This legitimacy implies a strong symbolic value insofar as it becomes apparent to the environment in which such organizations are inserted (Amarante; Crubellate; Meyer JR., 2016). Crubellate, Pascucci and Grave (2008) understand the legitimacy as a requirement for organizational survival. For Scott (2001), the survival and prosperity of organizations also depend on acceptability and social credibility. Therefore, it is understood that for institutional theory, legitimacy is an important requirement for the strategic action of organizations. So, think about legitimacy for universities is to think of the social systems of meanings that are being constructed in this field. That is, what has become important for the legitimization of universities. In this aspect, the rankings are studied as something that gives legitimacy to the universities.

**Internationalization of Universities:** Internationalization of higher education comprises a complex system, interconnecting terms such as comprehensive internationalization, mobility and internationalization at home (Beelen; Jones, 2015). So, the internationalization of higher education is "the process in which an international and intercultural dimension is integrated into the teaching, research and services of an institution" (Knight, 1993, p. 7). Later, the definition was improved for "internationalization at the national, sector, and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of postsecondary education" (Knight, 2003, p.2). About the changes in the institutional field, it can be seen that the HEIs of emerging countries have awakened to the needs and benefits of the internationalization of teaching and research activities for their development. The tradition of the European and American institutions continues to influence the guidelines that the HEIs of other countries, for example the Brazilian ones, follow in their own institutions (Dal-Soto; Alves; Souza, 2016). According to Veiga (2012) it should be noted that internationalization is interpreted and used differently in different countries. In this sense, it is emphasized that the cultural differences between the countries and the very difference of the organizational culture between HEIs changes how internationalization will be operationalized in each HEI. The possible reasons for HEIs to lead the internationalization process are: political reasons; economic development; sociocultural and academic (De Wit, 2002; Knight, 1997). In view of the internationalization of HEIs, Oliveira and Freitas (2016) point out that the possible benefits for institutions are the development of cooperation between universities; scientific, technological or cultural collaboration; formation of joint research teams; formation of shared degree; international mobility of students in undergraduate and postgraduate studies and international mobility of teachers. Thus, the internationalization of an HEI involves not only a set of policies, but also strategies, actions and actors (Oliveira; Freitas, 2016). In addition to this internationalization concept of HEI, Robson (2017) presents internationalization at home, that is, at the IES campus itself. In other words, the study of internationalization at home as a set of academic activities aimed at international

opportunities, without the effective necessity of the mobility of teachers or national students abroad (Crowther *et al.*, 2009), some examples like: subjects taught in a foreign language; language courses offered on the IES campus; interaction between teachers and local and foreign students and disciplines focused on foreign aspects. An another important action is when the university can design policies to foment international collaboration and partnerships by encouraging faculty for sabbatical research period as visitor scholars abroad. Such action can impact university's international insertion and performance in university rankings, mainly when it results in publication of papers in international journals. This highlights the importance of understanding internationalization in an emerging country, which strategies, facilities, difficulties, barriers will be felt differently in one country in another context. And legitimacy - institutional theory - reinforces the study in the understanding of how internationalization is measured in the national and international rankings of a Brazilian university.

## METHODOLOGY

In order to understand the influence of the internationalization performance indicators of rankings as legitimacy for the institutional field of a Brazilian public university, a qualitative research was chosen in the study and analysis the State University of Maringa (UEM). The qualitative research allows to answer particular questions of a case, expressing the situations through beliefs, meanings, values, that is, a deeper level of understanding of relationships and phenomena (MINAYO; DESLANDES; CRUZ NETO; GOMES, 2002). The method used was descriptive, since the facts and phenomena of reality were described (TRIVIÑOS, 1987), in this case, the reality of UEM.

**Brief History about State University of Maringa:** The State University of Maringa (Universidade Estadual de Maringá, in portuguese - UEM) - located in the State of Parana in Brazil - had its creation date in the year 1969. In 1970 the UEM became a foundation, in which it remains until the moment, and finally, had its merit and autonomy recognized in the year 1976. UEM has 63 bachelor's degree, 43 master's degree, 27 doctoral degree, 4 professional master's degree and 56 executive education courses, with 20,522 students enrolled in seven campus/different cities, with R\$ 737 million budget for the year 2017 (accessed in <http://www.asp.uem.br/cpl/>).

### Ruf and the at a Brazilian State University

**Ranking Universitário Folha – Ruf:** According to Table 1, in the first year of the RUF survey, in 2012, UEM was ranked in 19th in the national ranking and 2nd in the state ranking. In the national ranking, it was in front of the UEM 12 federal universities, four state universities and two private universities (non-profit) and in the state ranking, only included the Federal University of Parana (UFPR) in front of UEM. Over the years, however, UEM has been losing positions in the RUF ranking, in 2013 in 22nd, 2015 to 2017 in the 24th with the change from the 2nd to the 3rd in the state ranking in 2015. In 2018, UEM was ranked in 25th in the national ranking, losing six positions since 2012 and third in the state ranking, losing one position since 2012. The two interviewees, A1 and A2, believe that the university rankings have created a movement in the institutional field of universities, allowing a legitimacy to those with more advantageous positions. The create the metrics and standards for evaluations of universities, the rankings undergo a certain framework.

**Table 1. Overall Ranking of UEM by RUF**

YEAR	National Ranking	State Ranking	Teaching32%	Research42%	IndustryIncome18%	Innovation4%	Internationalization4%
2012	19th	2nd	21st	20th	37th	14th	-
2013	22nd	2nd	17th	22nd	57th	14th	47th
2014	23rd	2nd	23rd	24th	32nd	14th	75th
2015	24th	3rd	22nd	25th	35th	14th	69th
2016	24th	2nd	21st	27th	29th	18th	63rd
2017	24th	2nd	22nd	26th	30th	22nd	56th
2018	25th	3rd	23rd	24th	32nd	50th	59th

**Table 2. Ranking Internationalization of the UEM by the RUF**

YEAR	Internationalization 4%	International Citations - Teachers	International authors
2012	-	-	-
2013	47th	-	-
2014	75th	33rd	123rd
2015	69th	32nd	118th
2016	63rd	28th	115th
2017	56th	32nd	96th
2018	59th	28th	119th

The data was outlined in two moments, first a documentary research was done referring to the data collected from the rankings RUF and THE, in which they were chosen because they are considered the most important and influential – it is ranking of two prestigious newspapers, one in Brazil and one in England - that UEM is highest ranking players in both. The profile to the study conducted under the internationalization performance indicator among the five evaluated. Internationalization was chosen because it is the indicator with the worst performance of the university studied, ranking in the 59th place in the RUF in 2018 and with a low representativeness in the ranking THE 2019.

In the second stage of the collection of data was realized a semistructured interview with university staff, with positions at the institution that may contribute to the purpose of the study. So, two UEM staffs were interviewed, in this study denominated as A1 and A2, occupying positions of Advisors in distinct departments in the institution. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed for a better appreciation of the information collected.

But it is not something imposed only on one side, according to the interviewee's speech:

"In general, (the rankings) have influenced a lot and will influence even more, a movement that seems recent in the history of universities, a decade at the most, but that it is already strong and will become more and more" [...] "UEM has come this movement now, but if it tends and becomes very strong" [...] "has the ranking influenced? I think it already influences and will influence more, in several ways: it will homogenize even more, because universities are institutions institutionalized, they are already very similar, and I think this will become even more" [...] "People can not afford to give up the ranking because we have been wanting to grow, improve, attract good students, if we want it all, the mechanism is the ranking today, so it's not that the ranking is something determinist, I insist, the owners of the rankings want to impose this? No, they are playing with us, they are smart, they make us want the ranking. Universities are feeding this, UEM feeds this (like other universities) every time

we go to the media and says: Oh, we are the best in Parana, the second, the third, at that moment, we had already reinforced the ranking, we had already made the game " (Interviewee A1).

For the interviewee A2, rankings are simplistic measures to measure such important aspects, but it cannot be neglected in UEM, because, in a way, it is the reputation among peers and especially for new students. It is important to note that "there are researches conducted by some universities in the state of São Paulo, which has discussed the construction of these rankings [...] As much as it is indicators that do not represent everything, but somehow it is necessary to define a criterion" (Interviewee A2). Therefore, we understand the possible failures of this system of measurement of universities, but here we intend to think how these criteria have been used in UEM and the importance of contextualizing internationalization in Brazilian daily, as explained by Veiga (2012), internationalization is interpreted in different ways in different countries. Table 2 shows the internationalization performance indicator in the two components that are evaluated to finalize the final ranking of this indicator (RUF, 2019). The first is International Citations of Teachers, which represents the ratio of international citations of teachers in the database of the Web of Science platform and the second, International Authors, represents the ratio of international publications with the participation of foreign authors (RUF, 2019).

It is noticed that the component 1 - International citations of teachers - has a ranking better than the final ranking of internationalization, in 2018 component 1 ranked 28th, while the final ranking of the indicator was 59th. This difference in position between the final indicator and component 1 reflects in component 2 - Publications with international authors - which is pulling down the final average because component 2 is ranked in 119th. Thus, it is demonstrated the low participation of international authors in the publications, opposing the theory of 'internationalization at home' according to Robson (2017) in which internationalization can take place on the university campus. One of the possible 'internationalization at home' strategies for UEM is the professors who carried out the Post-Doctorate abroad to develop researches and write articles with the pairs of these foreign universities. This aspect is confirmed in the speech of the interviewee A2:

"Insertion is the output, the result of the actions of internationalization. So when I go out to do a postdoctoral abroad, I'm doing an internationalization action. When this postdoctoral turns out to be an article co-authored with a researcher from a foreign university, I am making an international insertion. So we have to think that we have to combine the internationalization actions that in fact result in an international insertion in a consistent way, because that way I consolidate the internationalization in a university " (Interviewee A2).

The interviewee A2 points out which needs to be built within the UEM some mechanisms that tie the internalization actions to the international insertions. For example: "set a deadline, perhaps one year, so that the teacher, when returning from postdoctoral studies, submits an article to an international journal on co-authoring with their supervisor" (Interviewee A2), reinforces that "interacting with researchers out there is not a way of 'prostitution' or subordination, but working in partnership that makes it possible to rethink what research is, exchange of learning and experience" (Interviewee A2). If UEM adopt strategies of 'internationalization at home' like publish articles in international journals with foreign authors, perhaps, could be more visible, increase possibly citations thereof, in which the ratio of component 1 would also grow. Here, it is important to emphasize that the language in Brazil is Portuguese and if UEM does not have internationalization strategies, Brazilian researchers will possibly publish in the Portuguese language, limiting the scope of the research. Because there are movements of some Brazilian researchers who wonder why to publish in another language if the research is a local/regional reality. But, it is emphasized that the particularity of one place may be similar to another place, or at least helps to better

understand the particularity of that other foreign place. Therefore, it is fundamental to break the cultural barrier in some areas of study in Brazil. The interviewee A1 has a personal experience he had to perform his postdoctoral studies in Italy and recalls that missed the opportunity to write articles with their Italian peers, so resented this lack of understanding of the internationalization at that time. In view of this, the interviewee even considered a possible strategy for UEM "why do not we create a prerequisite for a new postdoctorate? The teacher needs to prove partnership in articles and research with foreign peers" (Interviewee A1). According to Suchman (1995) legitimacy is the perception or presupposition of the desirable actions for the other institutions of the field, we can see a movement of other universities, state and federal, to analyze and discuss the results of the rankings and what attitudes to be taken. In this sense, it is important to highlight the importance of the UEM to take into account the actions of the rankings and other universities that could make it legitimate for UEM not to isolate itself from the institutional field. The discussion is not about considering the ranking as a primer to be followed by the institution, but as Crubellate, Pascucci and Grave (2008) mention that legitimacy is a requirement for the survival of the organization, as also observed in the interviewee's speech:

"So (the ranking) has a lot of legitimacy, the ranking today is a source of legitimacy. The university that does not realize this will have serious problems and those who realize this and work on it, will advance, you very well know that USP (State University of São Paulo) is opening an office to take care only of ranking " [...] "So why USP is the first (placed in the rankings) and for a long time will not fail to be (the first place) is the first (university) to worry about the ranking because it is ahead and you already know the importance of this and do not want to lose because you already know if losing positions will be a disaster for them (USP)" (Interviewee A1).

And when questioning the interviewee A1 that when a university, the first ranked in Brazil and Latin America, accepts the ranking and creates an intelligence committee to deal only with university rankings, if it spreads this legitimacy in the institutional field, reinforcing the movement towards smaller universities, the interviewee comments:

"It has a two-way process, when the USP does this, it legitimizes the rankings and collects more universities, it is a mutual reinforcement. Imagine a university like Stanford (in the United States), that one day it (Stanford) says that since we are the best, we do not interest anymore and leave the rankings, imagine a ranking that can not score North American universities, it's a ranking that others do not want to follow safely, surely the rankings also become very relevant when the best universities in the world (North American, European, Japanese, Asian, Australian) want to be in these rankings. If in any geographical context you say that this ranking does not make sense and leaves, it loses credibility, so yes, you have full reason to say this, so it (USP) values the ranking" (Interviewee A1).

**Times higher education world university rankings-the:** The most updated ranking list of THE is the year 2019 and it has a total of a little more than 1,250 universities evaluated between the five continents, and the database used for the data collection is the Elsevier platform (THE, 2019). Since the founding in 2004 of THE, UEM was classified in the years 2019, 2018 and 2017, losing positions in 2017 for the year 2018 as shown in Table 3. By the 199th ranking, universities are classified position by position, from this the universities are classified in blocks (THE, 2019). UEM are ranked in the block more than 800th worldwide in 2017 and 1001+ (more than the thousandth) in 2018 and 2019 among the universities of the five continents. Like the methodology of the THE ranking is different from the RUF, the data from the five performance indicators in THE are shown in points and not in position, according to Table 4. The Internationalization performance indicator is critical for UEM and should be observed and worked between the responsible departments of the university, as pointed out by both interviewees:

Table 3. Ranking UEM byTHE

YEAR	International Rankings	LatinAmerica Rankings
2019	1001+	-
2018	1001+	71-80
2017	> 800	61 - 70

Table 4. Overall and Courses Ranking of UEM byTHE

2019	Ranking	Overall	Teaching	Research	Citations	IndustryIncome	Internationaloutlook
UEM	1001+	9.8 - 18.9	20.7	10	6.4	34.4	16
Clinical&health	601+	13.9 - 22.7	14.3	9.1	18.8	41.6	16.4
Life Sciences	601+	7.6 - 20.1	18.8	10.7	7	30.9	14.7
PhysicalSciences	801+	8.2 - 17.2	15.6	6.2	16.1	30.7	17.7
Engineering	801+	9.0 - 15.3	12.6	5.9	21	30.1	21.2
Arts&Humanities	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Business &Economics	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Computer Science	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Education	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Law	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Phychology	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Sciences	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 5. The UEM compared to the five best university in Latin America Ranking by THE

Country	University	Latin A. Ranking	World Ranking	Overall	Citations	Industry Income	International Outlook	Research	Teaching
Brazil	State University of Maringa	71-80	1001+	9.8 / 18.9	6.4	34.4	16	10	20.7
Brazil	Universityof São Paulo	1	251 / 300	4 6.4 / 49.4	37	39.5	32.7	53.5	55.9
Brazil	Universityof Campinas	2	401 / 500	37.1 / 41.6	33.4	44.6	28.6	37.5	46.8
Chile	UniversityofDevelopment	3	401 / 500	37.1 / 41.6	94.3	33.5	45.6	8.2	12.5
Chile	Diego PortalesUniversity	4	401 / 500	37.1 / 41.6	90.1	34	51.2	10.3	13.2
Peru	PeruvianUniversityCayetanoHeredia	5	501 / 600	33.5 / 37	76.3	34.7	45.9	11.5	15.4

"For example, in the case of the UEM, which is among the 25<sup>th</sup> in Brazil, internationalization is inescapable, it has no choice but to let go of it, since we are among the best in the country, internationalization is almost fatal, necessary, that today internationalization is necessary, very important" (Interviewee A1).

And also noted by the interviewee A2:

"I can see internationalization as a way to help UEM improve ranking, not only in the indexes of internationalization itself but also in other indexes, as a spillover, that is, an overflow of this internationalization effort. Although this is not yet seen in a concrete way in the university" (Interviewee A2).

However, it is necessary to better understand the concept of internationalization for the Brazilian context, for Crowther et al. (2009) can be international opportunities without the effective necessity of the mobility of national teachers or students abroad, that is, articles written with foreign researchers is already a way of 'internationalization at home'. It can be seen that the UEM courses are better ranked than the university itself, it has two courses in the 601+ (Clinical, Pre-clinical and Health and Life Sciences) and two courses ranked in 801+ (Physics Sciences, and Engineering and Technology). It should be emphasized here that the courses of the UEM with advantageous positions in this ranking, can lead to internationalization with greater rigor, fomenting actions and tying well with the international insertion, effecting internationalization in the course. In this sense, as commented by the interviewee A2, "ranking itself can generate a virtuous (or vicious) circle, which generates attractiveness and more search for foreign students and researchers, and more partnerships in international publications". According to Table 5, UEM is compared with the top five placed in theTHE Latin America Ranking, where UEM occupies the position between 71-80th. Given this result, it is again demonstrated that the critical point of UEM in the rankings is the internationalization performance indicator, which is among the worst evaluations along with the citations performance indicator.

It is observed that the score of the other three performance indicators such as industry income, research and teaching surpass some universities that are among the top five in Latin America. The ranking is a factor which demonstrates the need to improve strategies for the internationalization of UEM, not only to attract foreign students or increase in national and international rankings, but to have more publications and citations in international journals and partnerships with foreign researchers. This is corroborated by the interviewee A2, when it is mentioned about the indirect results that the internationalization can bring:

"Interaction allows you see different ways of doing things, not just techniques, about different ways of thinking about research. When we see different ways of doing research, and constructing ways of doing research, constructing research problems that result in scientific articles that make more sense for an international publication [...] it improves our performance in research, as well as in the extension question, in the interaction with society because the results have to be in the real world" (Interviewee A2).

It should be stressed that this need does not mean that it should give priority to writing in a foreign language and, therefore, depreciating the native language of Brazilian researchers, but ratifies the need to develop more research with international researchers, adding high knowledge for both parties. In this respect, it can be seen in the statements of the interviewee A2 that a great barrier found in UEM to publish in foreign languages, such as English, is the culture instituted to believe that this is a submission to a hegemonic language or a depreciation of the native language. Thus, "cultural barriers need to be overcome, so as not to lose the 'tram' of higher education in Brazil, not just internationalization, and this demands an enormous cultural effort, which is more difficult than money" (Interviewee A2). So, internationalization in brazilian context is not easy. We can risk saying that 'internationalization at home' in Brazil is more difficult than an international mobility, because when you travel to another country, you are able to experience a new culture. But, when you tell about 'internationalization at home' you need to modify your culture

and conceptions, creating a major barrier to adaptation, especially in a public university at an emerging country.

### Final Thoughts

A previous analysis of the rankings suggests that if UEM determines strategies to improve university internationalization vis-à-vis the global society, it will automatically improve the indicators in the rankings. If the objective of the university is to increase the score in the rankings, it does not necessarily need to work ranking by ranking, since the two rankings analyzed have a base practically common in the evaluation. However, these strategies are not simple to implement at the university due to several barriers, one of them being the cultural issue. In which an initial change would transform the way the academic community of UEM think about internationalization, it is not the ranking by ranking, it needs a sense most like thinking in shaping social students (a citizen more complete for the world: tolerant, supportive, respectful, accepting diversity and difference), whether for those who come to Brazil or for those who go abroad. As observed in the results of the THE ranking, it has two other performance indicators that are critical in evaluating the rankings for UEM, Research and Citations. However, it is analyzed that by improving the internationalization performance indicator, which according to Crowther et al. (2009) we can increase internationalization without leaving campus, we will increase the numbers of the surveys with international pairs and possibly the number of citations, making these two other indicators increase as well. It is important considering that rankings have become a way of conferring legitimacy to universities. So much that, the analyzed data corroborate presenting movements in the attitudes taken in other universities, state and federal, considering and discussing the results of rankings. It is relevant to understand that, even with metrics more quantifying than qualifying, such rankings have gained much importance in the academic field. The rankings studied in this study have the possibility of giving visibility, trust and legitimacy to the well-ranked universities, in which universities homogenize and with this, improve communication with government and society. As Crubellate, Pascucci and Grave (2008) mention, legitimacy is a requirement for the survival of the organization and like argued that the rankings can confer such legitimacy, stresses that UEM should note the strategic actions considering "improve" its position in some rankings, taking care not to isolate themselves from significant actions to the field. Thus, it is concluded from the importance of understanding that rankings have been building a system of meanings for the institutional field of universities. Something to question with the two rankings analyzed, and also considering others not studied, are the sources of the information. That is, the veracity and reliability of the data for the survey of the university's scores. It is not a question to suspect the credibility of the rankings, since both rankings are from prestigious newspapers, but it is a question to be made. Why did the university fall a lot in the ranking? Why did the university go up a lot in the ranking?

According to a story about the THE ranking of newspaper *Estadão* published on January 15, 2019, the State University of São Paulo are creating "intelligence nuclei" to improve academic performance, which "are offices or commissions that bridge to the agencies responsible for the main evaluations and give practical tips to researchers on the best visibility of scientific publications" (Accessed in [encurtador.com.br/cgMR4](http://encurtador.com.br/cgMR4)). In view of this, to understand that internationalization in the Brazilian context may be different from other contexts - especially the North American and European - it is understood that the universities are no longer local or regional, but, global universities. That is, physical space ceases to be the campus of the university, and interaction with international researchers; international magazines; and partnerships with international teachers / students / companies widens the scope and develops beneficial actions for both parties.

**Limitations and Future Studies:** Even considering the national ranking (RUF) and the international (THE) as the main rankings that influence the institutional field of UEM, a possible limitation of the study was to have chosen only those two rankings from a list of

countless others as presented in the study. As future studies it is suggested to study the innovation performance indicator of the RUF, having lost 36 positions in the ranking between the years 2012 to 2018 - while the internationalization lost 19 positions - and analyze possible influences of this state in the institutional field of UEM or of other Brazilians universities. We also note this concern about innovation and industry income in the speech of the interviewee A1 "we should do much better, but much more, in the matter of joint work with companies".

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